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26 June 2019

Ms Jo Oliver
Headteacher
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Dear Ms Oliver

Short inspection of Tillingbourne Junior School

Following my visit to the school on 13 June 2019, I write on behalf of Her Majesty's Chief Inspector of Education, Children's Services and Skills to report the inspection findings. The visit was the first short inspection carried out since the school was judged to be good in January 2016.

This school continues to be good.

The leadership team has maintained the good quality of education in the school since the last inspection. You and your deputy headteacher are highly ambitious for the pupils to achieve well both academically and in their personal development. Staff receive well-focused professional development, demonstrating your high aspirations for the quality of their teaching. You understand the school's priorities well. You have a clear set of well-planned strategies that are being implemented effectively. Strategic decisions are made as a team and this ensures that improvements are delivered and checked consistently and systematically by the most suitable staff. Your colleagues are very positive about the school. They feel well supported to carry out their roles and say that leaders consider their well-being thoughtfully.

Pupils like school and enjoy learning. They said that they like lessons because 'teachers make them interactive and fun', and that they feel safe because behaviour is 'really good' and there is no bullying. Pupils felt that there are lots of staff that they could talk to if they had a worry.

Parents and carers are very appreciative, supportive and positive about the school. They said that their children are cared for well, provided with good support and challenged in their learning. One parent said: 'My daughter is happy and enjoys going to school. She feels heard and looked after.'

Governance is strong. Governors are knowledgeable about the school's priorities

because they monitor the impact of teachers and leaders closely. They are aspirational for pupils and, as a result, challenge leaders effectively on outcomes for pupils, particularly for disadvantaged pupils. Governors' sharply focused visits enable them to confirm for themselves how well the school's improvement priorities are being addressed. This enables them to support leaders and provide further challenge from a well-informed position.

School leaders have addressed effectively the areas for improvement identified at the last inspection. Leaders were asked to further improve teaching. Teaching quality is consistently strong because leaders monitor the quality of teaching carefully and follow up rigorously on any previously identified weaker practice. The school was asked to ensure that pupils are provided with more helpful guidance to support them to improve their work. Support for pupils is tailored well to their individual needs. Pupils said that they get lots of help that they find valuable. Leaders were also asked to improve the attendance of a small number of disadvantaged pupils. Attendance overall is above the national average because leaders promote the importance of regular attendance very well. Despite comprehensive efforts by the school, the attendance of a very small minority of disadvantaged pupils remains too low.

A priority for the school is to raise the level of challenge in some writing tasks to ensure that pupils' progress in writing is consistently strong. In the teaching of writing, the quality of questioning sometimes varies and does not stretch pupils' thinking sufficiently. Consequently, the pace of learning slows.

Safeguarding is effective.

Leaders ensure that safeguarding arrangements are effective and that records are detailed and of high quality. Staff are well trained. Leaders check on the effectiveness of training by challenging and supporting staff as they carry out their safeguarding responsibilities. You and the designated safeguarding leads have a secure knowledge of the most up-to-date guidance and legislation. These factors, coupled with an open and highly collegiate approach to keeping pupils safe, promote a strong culture of safeguarding across the school.

You and the staff ensure that pupils learn in a supportive and caring environment. Pupils know how to keep themselves and others safe because it is a key part of the school's curriculum. I spoke with a group of pupils who unanimously agreed that they feel safe and very secure in school. Pupils explained confidently how to keep safe, both online, and in the community. The very large majority of parents agree that their children are safe at school.

Inspection findings

- Pupils' outcomes in writing are good. Teachers explain clearly to pupils how to use a wide range of vocabulary to make their writing lively and interesting. Staff plan the improvement of pupils' writing skills well so that pupils understand how to develop and sustain the quality of their writing across different genres. For

example, pupils in Year 4 have a good understanding of how to build a character description sequentially using different aspects of a person's personality and appearance to bring the character to life.

- Support staff provide timely and bespoke support to ensure that pupils, including those with special educational needs and/or disabilities, make strong progress in their writing. There are times, when the level of challenge in pupils' writing tasks is not high enough, that learning slows as a result. Occasionally, staff ask questions in lessons that do not stretch pupils' thinking sufficiently. This reduces the progress that pupils make in developing their writing skills.
- Disadvantaged pupils make strong progress in reading, writing and mathematics. Teachers take good account of what pupils have learned previously in lessons. As a result, and when required, disadvantaged pupils receive additional support that is effective in helping their learning move forward quickly. This is especially where there is a gap in their knowledge. Disadvantaged pupils read confidently, accurately and with a good level of expression when reading aloud. Pupils are challenged appropriately to understand the meaning behind complex sentences.
- Teachers use teaching assistants and other resources, including the 'reading dog', to ensure that they promote pupils' reading skills well. Disadvantaged pupils' writing is purposeful and of good quality. This is because they have a good understanding of how to write well, with the audience firmly in mind. In mathematics, work in their books shows that disadvantaged pupils are making strong progress. Teachers plan challenging and engaging tasks to ensure that pupils develop their skills of reasoning and problem solving rapidly. This helps them to apply their mathematical knowledge in different contexts capably.
- Lower-attaining pupils, and boys, make strong gains in reading and writing. You have a clear and comprehensive system of tracking pupils' progress that provides teachers with an accurate picture of these groups of pupils' current skills. Listening to pupils read during the inspection indicates that pupils reach a good standard in reading across the school. Your teachers use a good range of high-quality texts so that boys' and lower-attaining pupils' vocabulary is extended, and they learn how language is manipulated in more complex ways. Pupils' reading comprehension is good, including understanding an author's choice of words and phrases.
- In writing, lower-attaining pupils, and boys, receive clear and helpful guidance on how to edit and redraft their writing so that it is of a higher quality. Pupils' writing from these two groups shows considerable flair and a good understanding of some complex writing features. Pupils use these skills well.
- Pupils are keen to come to school. They are punctual, make a swift start to the school day and at the start of lessons are quick to focus on their work. You and your senior staff analyse attendance information well and act swiftly on it. You work well with the local authority to ensure that pupils attend school regularly. Leaders have ensured that attendance overall is above the national average. Disadvantaged pupils, however, still do not attend school regularly enough and their attendance is below other pupils. The persistent absence for some disadvantaged pupils has decreased considerably and this is having a very positive impact on the achievement of this group of pupils.

Next steps for the school

Leaders and those responsible for governance should ensure that:

- writing tasks are appropriately challenging so all pupils make strong progress
- questioning is used consistently to extend pupils' understanding of how to write high-quality pieces of work.

I am copying this letter to the chair of the governing body, the regional schools commissioner and the director of children's services for Surrey. This letter will be published on the Ofsted website.

Yours sincerely

Richard Blackmore
Ofsted Inspector

Information about the inspection

During this inspection, I observed learning with you and your deputy headteacher and spent time looking at the quality of pupils' work. We discussed your evaluation of the school's strengths and areas for improvement. I assessed the success of the actions you and your team have taken since the last inspection. I held discussions with members of your governing body, including the chair of governors. I spoke to pupils about their learning and their views of the school, and listened to pupils read. I spoke with parents after school and considered the 86 responses to Ofsted's online questionnaire, Parent View. I took account of 48 responses from staff and 96 responses from pupils to the Ofsted online questionnaires. I reviewed certain school documents, including the written evaluation of the school's work, documents relating to the checks made on the quality of teaching and learning, school assessment information, minutes of meetings of the governing body, attendance information, and a range of policies and safeguarding information.