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Denise Burrell
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Dear Mrs Burrell

Short inspection of Ickworth Park Primary School

Following my visit to the school on 18 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 second short inspection carried out since the school was judged to be good in November 2010.

This school continues to be good.

The leadership team has maintained the good quality of education in the school since the last inspection. You were appointed in 2016 when Ickworth Park extended its age range to include pupils in Year 5 and Year 6. You have strengthened the leadership of subject areas by appointing and developing effective middle leaders who are dedicated to delivering your vision for an inspirational curriculum. You have instilled leaders at all levels with a passion and energy for their specialism, which is recognised and appreciated by pupils.

Leaders' ideas are driven by the aspiration for every pupil to be a valuable member of the local community and to be able to make connections with a wide variety of people, places and issues. To enable this to happen an impressive variety and quantity of exciting visits, projects and collaborations are woven into the school day to motivate pupils, spark their curiosity and provide learning opportunities to complement lessons.

Leaders and governors have built strong relationships with credible partners who play an important role in challenging and developing the school. A wide range of helpful connections to external professional expertise, such as the Bury Schools Partnership and the local authority, provide support and challenge. High-profile organisations such as the National Theatre offer valuable opportunities for staff development and widen the experience of pupils.

Pupils enjoy school and love all the activities they have a chance to do. They feel

very much in a partnership with their teachers. One pupil commented, 'We have a balance of everything and we fit in all the fun things.' Pupils are clear about when they are making progress, 'You whizz through it ... if one day you haven't done it right ... persevere! No one laughs at you – if you make a mistake they help you.'

Committed governors have a united vision and clear goals for the quality of education. The expertise of the governor team is wide and useful to the school, especially around safeguarding, where there is some excellent professional experience.

The leadership team has responded effectively to the improvements asked of the school in the previous inspection report. Leaders have ensured that there are plenty of opportunities for pupils to write at length. We saw numerous examples of extended writing on display and in books. The many activities you provide to inspire writing and the strong emphasis you have placed on reading have improved the quality of written work. Year 6 pupils were thrilled at the prospect of writing an alternative end to the school production. Presentation of work in books and on display is well organised and neat because pupils take pride in their work.

Safeguarding is effective.

Leaders prioritise a high level of vigilance and consideration, which ensures that the safeguarding needs of individuals are well met. Records of checks are meticulously kept, and this means that all adults working with pupils are suitable. Governors regularly monitor the record of checks to make sure that it meets legal requirements.

As designated safeguarding lead, you ensure that staff are appropriately trained and, as a result, staff effectively assess risks and report concerns in a timely way. You work closely with external agencies so that the needs of vulnerable pupils are addressed.

Pupils told me that they feel safe at school and that teachers talk to them regularly about how to keep safe both in and out of school, including when they are using the internet.

Inspection findings

- We agreed that I would look at how the curriculum is being developed so that pupils make rapid progress. I found strong evidence of a very broad and balanced curriculum designed to make learning exciting, engaging and effective. Pupils are provided with an extensive range of experiences through visits, workshops, collaborations and projects, which helps them to extend their knowledge and practise the skills they need to make progress. Subject area leaders play an important part in developing the skills of other teaching staff so that their expertise and confidence levels are continually increasing and benefiting pupils.
- Arts subjects are a strength of the school and play an important role in enriching the quality of education that pupils receive. All of the many arts-based projects are usefully linked to other curriculum subjects, helping pupils to see how different subject areas are connected in real life. For example, a Hindu dance workshop

provided pupils with insight into a different culture. Another example linked up drawing from nature with a science project at the botanical gardens. High-profile projects, such as working on a National Theatre performance initiative and being involved in Young Voices, have enthused children and parents alike: 'We sang in a choir of 8,000 children and we sang our hearts out at the concert. It was a wonderful experience.' Pupils are using important skills such as collaboration and gaining an understanding of creative processes across the curriculum.

- 'The child as a reader and writer' is a fundamental principle of the school. Leaders are fully committed to this value in the belief that, 'a good reader becomes a good writer'. Reading is at the heart of the school and the newly refreshed library contains a wonderful range of books carefully chosen to inspire, provoke thought and make links with life. A 'genre map' on display in the Year 6 class demonstrates how you encourage pupils to read a wide range of stories, poems, plays and non-fiction to prepare them for their studies at secondary school.
- There is a sense of excitement about mathematics at the school. All staff are confident and excited about teaching mathematical knowledge and skills. Teachers are encouraged to ask mathematical questions based on real-life situations and this connects to the whole-school approach to applying knowledge and skills effectively. Children in Reception are exposed to mathematical vocabulary and apparatus that they will use further up the school, so they are made familiar with ways of working at an early stage. There is a culture of valuing and celebrating mistakes. Pupils are willing to share errors with the class and learn from them, and in this way, misconceptions are quickly addressed.
- We looked together at teaching and the curriculum in Reception and observed reflective practice that has an impact on an effective approach to meeting individual needs. We saw that the priority in Reception is to make sure that each child is ready to take on Year 1 challenges. We found a calm and happy atmosphere in which children were making good progress and having great fun as well. We also noted that children's speech, language and communication were not as well developed as other areas of their learning.
- Across the school, most pupils achieve well. The proportion of children attaining a good level of development at the end of Reception is average. Key stage 1 national test results have been consistently above the national average over a number of years. Key stage 2 results in reading, writing and mathematics combined were above the national average in 2018. However, not all pupils who are able to, achieve higher standards and/or greater depth.
- Leaders analyse all assessment information carefully so that they can plan effectively to improve performance. Additional checks made by professionals external to the school confirm that assessment of pupils' work is accurate. However, historically, internal systems have not always provided the required intelligence to anticipate dips in achievement.
- Pupils with special educational needs and/or disabilities (SEND) make good progress from their relative starting points. This is because, in addition to ensuring highly individual needs are met, the special educational needs coordinator has an influence over constructing the curriculum and is involved in learning and teaching initiatives. This was particularly evident in the rehearsal for the Year 5 and Year 6

production, which demonstrated how barriers to learning are eliminated through careful planning and support. As a result, we saw pupils with significantly challenging needs participating fully and with evident enjoyment.

- You have invested in specialist roles that support pupils' emotional well-being. These roles provide a strong level of support across the school. Barriers to engagement and learning are being successfully addressed.
- Most parents are warm in their praise of the school because of the huge range of exciting learning opportunities, offered in the classroom and beyond, and effective teaching. However, some parents are dissatisfied with communication, especially connected to receiving information about their children's progress. They lack knowledge and understanding about your vision for the curriculum and how it achieves a good quality of education.

Next steps for the school

Leaders and those responsible for governance should ensure that:

- your vision for the curriculum is shared effectively with all parents
- parents are well informed about the progress their children are making across a wide range of subject areas
- all pupils capable of attaining higher standards achieve their goals
- further strategies to support speech, language and communication needs are implemented as a foundation for good progress.

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

Yours sincerely

Elizabeth Cornish

Ofsted Inspector

Information about the inspection

During the inspection, I met with you, your senior leadership team and other leaders. I spoke with parents and three members of the governing body. I spoke formally with a group of pupils and informally with others around the school and in lessons. Furthermore, I observed teaching and learning with you in every classroom, except those groups in Years 3 and 4 who were on a school trip. As well as looking at pupils' books, I examined a range of documentation, including that relating to safeguarding and your evaluation of how well the school is performing. I undertook a review of the school's website. I considered 67 responses to Ofsted's free-text service, 73 responses to Ofsted's online questionnaire, Parent View, and 23 responses to the staff questionnaire. There were no responses to the pupil questionnaire.

