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4 September 2019

Mrs Sue Ferguson
Headteacher
Ellen Wilkinson Primary School
Tollgate Road
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Dear Mrs Ferguson

Short inspection of Ellen Wilkinson Primary School

Following my visit to the school on 17 July 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 December 2015.

This school continues to be good.

The leadership team has maintained the good quality of education in the school since the last inspection. Based on the evidence gathered during this short inspection, I am of the opinion that the school has demonstrated strong practice and marked improvement in specific areas. This may indicate that the school has improved significantly overall. Therefore, I am recommending that the school's next inspection be a section 5 inspection.

You, your staff and governors have a clear vision for the school that promotes the achievement of every pupil within a caring community, based on the school values. This strong sense of community permeates the school, providing care and support for pupils, their families and staff. Together with senior leaders and governors, you are leading a determined and effective drive to ensure continuous and sustained improvement in the school. You and your leadership team have a clear view of the strengths of the school and the areas that need to be tackled to bring about further improvements. You all share a clear vision to enable pupils to achieve the best possible outcomes and to become mature and caring individuals.

In all subjects, this is a school where pupils take pride in their achievement. Standards across the school are high and by the end of key stage two, pupils leave above the national average in external tests. This shows that they are very well prepared for their next steps in education. They strive to achieve their best, work with purpose and have very positive attitudes to their learning. They behave well and say that bullying hardly ever happens. They have absolute confidence that any issues concerning behaviour will be dealt with fairly and swiftly by adults. Pupils are

courteous. They listen to each other, respect each other's ideas and work very well together. They regulate their own behaviour and, if they find behaviour is slipping, they remind others of the expectations in the school. Pupils are determined to apply themselves to their tasks to ensure that they work to the best of their abilities.

Along with governors and other leaders, you have rightly identified the need to improve pupils' progress in reading and this is the key priority for everyone. Reading now has a high profile across the school and you have introduced new approaches to strengthen the quality of the teaching of reading. In-school information shows that these changes are beginning to have a positive impact on pupils' outcomes. However, more work needs to be done to embed these new approaches, particularly to improve how well pupils understand what they have read. There also remain some inconsistencies in teaching, and teachers do not always challenge the most able pupils effectively.

Governors are committed, ambitious and determined to see the school do even better. They have an accurate understanding of the strengths of the school and the areas to improve. They provide a good blend of challenge and support and are not afraid to ask difficult questions of leaders. Governors are keen to improve and develop their own skills and regularly use a skills audit to support them with this.

Parents are overwhelmingly positive about all that the school offers their children. They are confident in your leadership. Parents are particularly pleased with your visibility and accessibility. They appreciate the fact that you not only know the names of all the pupils but know them as individuals too. As one parent wrote, typical of others: 'The headteacher is a fantastic leader and works extremely hard; she is always present in the school and is well known to parents and children.'

At the previous inspection, you were asked to improve standards in writing by improving the consistency of teaching in terms of teachers' expectations. End-of-key-stage data indicates that pupils' progress in writing is improving. You were also asked to complete a strategic plan that sets longer-term objectives to drive the aspiration to become an outstanding organisation within an agreed timescale. This has been written and reviewed on a regular basis.

Safeguarding is effective.

Safeguarding has a high priority in school. Staff have been comprehensively trained and are alert to the signs that pupils may need extra help. Staff readily report to leaders any concerns they have about pupils. Leaders deal with these appropriately, involving outside agencies when necessary to ensure that pupils get the right support. Leaders are tenacious in challenging outside agencies, including the local authority, if they are unhappy about decisions made about pupils' care.

All safeguarding arrangements are fit for purpose. All parents I spoke to and all who responded to Parent View said that pupils are safe in school, as did all staff who completed their inspection questionnaire.

Inspection findings

- At the start of the inspection, I met with you and your deputy headteacher to confirm the lines of enquiry for the inspection. We agreed these to be: progress of boys across the school in reading and writing; leaders' curriculum and subject development; and provision within the early years, due to the dip in 2018 in the end-of-year outcomes.
- Although standards have been high and above the national average, boys did not perform as well as girls in most subjects in the last two years. Leaders rightly identified this as a key issue for the school. Leaders monitor pupils' progress in reading, writing and mathematics every half term. Progress data for the summer term 2019 shows that most boys are now making faster progress. The progress of some boys still lags behind that of girls. However, staff identify which boys need extra help and ensure that this happens.
- The systematic approach which the school has taken to the teaching of writing was clear in every class that I visited. There is real consistency across the school. Lessons have been designed to ensure that pupils have opportunities to study and unpick what makes an effective piece of writing in the first instance. This understanding means pupils can then focus on including the more complex aspects of writing confidently.
- Over the last year, improving pupils' progress in reading has been, and continues to be, the school's main priority. A working party of leaders and teachers researched best practice in this area and identified strategies that they felt would be most effective for the pupils. They have provided appropriate training for staff, and together you regularly monitor and adjust these strategies as necessary. You have also changed the school's timetable to ensure that pupils have opportunities to read each day.
- Leaders have been working on developing a revised curriculum which makes links between subjects and provides purposeful learning opportunities for pupils. The broad curriculum contributes well to pupils' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development. However, while most pupils learn well within a unit of work, the curriculum in some foundation subjects, such as geography, is not always designed with enough continuity from one year to the next. This is leading to pupils repeating work unnecessarily and slowing their progress.
- Evidence in pupils' books shows that they do not always get the opportunity to learn about the different curriculum areas in sufficient depth and the coverage of the curriculum is not monitored closely enough. Sometimes, work is not planned well enough to challenge the most able pupils in subjects such as history and geography. Leaders have recognised this and have plans in place to work on this for the new academic year.
- For the final line of enquiry, we agreed to look at the extent to which you and your leaders ensure that the very youngest children progress well from their starting points in the early years. This is because the number of children achieving a good level of development at the end of Reception dipped in 2018.
- The allocation of funding to improve the outdoor learning environment has

resulted in open, welcoming and high-quality spaces in both Nursery and Reception. I observed adults engaging well with children and using questioning and modelling effectively to develop children's learning further. The children's learning journals evidence a wide range of interesting learning experiences over time. We observed that activities inside the Nursery and Reception classrooms have a clear focus, but we agreed that further work needs to be done to develop the same opportunities for challenge in the outdoor environment.

- The early years leader has a clear vision and detailed action plan to improve this part of the school still further. Children make good progress from starting points that are typically very low for their age. In-school performance information and my observations indicate, however, that overall the proportion of boys attaining a good level of development remains below that of the girls but has improved from 2018.

Next steps for the school

Leaders and those responsible for governance should ensure that:

- the new plans for the curriculum consider the sequencing of learning in order to deepen pupils' knowledge and understanding, and that these plans are implemented effectively
- they continue to embed and drive forward the improvements which are already having an impact on pupils' attainment in reading and in reducing the differences in attainment between boys and girls.

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

Yours sincerely

Michelle Thomas
Ofsted Inspector

Information about the inspection

I met regularly throughout the day with you, along with the deputy headteacher, to discuss a range of topics. These included outcomes for pupils, the curriculum and safeguarding. We also met early on in the inspection to discuss the self-evaluation of the school. I had meetings with nine middle leaders and with four members of the governing body. I also had a telephone conversation with a representative of the local authority. Together, we visited classes in all year groups to observe teaching and learning. During these visits, we looked at pupils' work. I also looked at some pupils' work in detail to evaluate their progress and the quality of the school's curriculum. I observed pupils' behaviour around the school and had a meeting with a group of seven pupils. I considered 251 responses to the pupil

survey, 42 responses to the staff questionnaire and 80 responses to Ofsted's online questionnaire, Parent View. I spoke with parents on the playground at the start of the day. I evaluated a range of documents, including the school's self-evaluation documents and development plans. I scrutinised the school's safeguarding policies, procedures and checks, and spoke with pupils and staff at various times during the school day in order to test out their understanding of safeguarding arrangements.