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16 January 2017

Colin Lavelle
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Dear Mr Lavelle

Short inspection of Dulwich Wood Primary School

Following my visit to the school on 6 December 2016, 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 May 2012.

This school continues to be good.

The leadership team has maintained the good quality of education in the school since the last inspection. They have responded positively and effectively to the areas for improvement identified at the last inspection.

You provide inspirational leadership. Your strong, caring, firm-but-fair approach to working with staff, pupils and parents makes everyone feel valued and proud to be part of the school community. You are well supported by your very effective leadership team, including governors. They strive constantly to develop and hone their skills in order to further improve teaching, learning and assessment and, therefore, outcomes for pupils.

Leaders and staff manage the behaviour of pupils very well. Since the previous inspection the behaviour policy has been enhanced and is highly effective. Pupils value the rewards they receive for behaviour and attendance. The giant emu and flamingo puppets that guard your office are used creatively to motivate pupils to achieve and attend well. They exemplify a unique feature of your school, which is the great sense of fun that you have cultivated. This supports the strong climate for learning and the high expectations which are evident in every classroom in the school.

You have been successful in ensuring that pupils leave the school at the end of Year

6 with standards which are above the national average in reading, writing and mathematics. In 2016, disadvantaged pupils did better than all pupils nationally in all of these subjects. Pupils who are currently in the school are making good progress, particularly in writing and mathematics. Notably, many pupils in key stage 1 are making very rapid progress in their writing. This indicates significant progress since the previous inspection.

You instil the British values of tolerance, friendship and respect in your pupils so that they are well prepared for life in modern Britain. All members of your vibrant school community are a pleasure to spend time with because they are friendly, confident and happy. Parents speak very highly of the school and appreciate the opportunities you provide for their children.

Leaders, including governors, have accurately identified areas for further improvement. Their sharp analysis of the context behind any weaker achievement in the past drives school improvement planning. For example, you recognise that the teaching of reading is something which you can develop further in order to help pupils make rapid progress and achieve even more. You understand why pupils did not do as well in the Year 1 phonics screening check in 2016 as they did in the past and you understand that further work needs to be done in order to improve pupils' outcomes in this aspect of their learning.

Observations in lessons and work in books show that teachers plan work which is set at an appropriate level for pupils' age. Occasionally, the most able pupils are not challenged to achieve what they are capable of. For example, the most able readers are sometimes given texts which do not challenge them in terms of their complexity. Occasionally, work in mathematics is too easy for the most able pupils. This shows itself in books. Some pupils never get anything wrong or make mistakes to learn from because the pitch of the work does not push them hard enough to improve.

Safeguarding is effective.

Leaders, staff and governors receive appropriate, up-to-date training to ensure that they are effective in keeping children safe. Parents and pupils agree that the school is a safe, caring place to be. Staff are highly vigilant and report any issues regarding pupils' well-being and safety swiftly. Leaders ensure that appropriate action is taken. They work tirelessly to secure support from external agencies as quickly as possible.

Leaders ensure that all appropriate checks are carried out on staff who are recruited to work at the school.

Inspection findings

- Pupils in all year groups across the school are making good progress. Leaders have undertaken a careful analysis of the outcomes pupils achieved in 2016. The drop in standards in the Year 1 phonics screening check and in the proportion of

pupils achieving a good level of development at the end of the Reception Year was a result of complex staffing issues which leaders dealt with effectively. Actions have been put in place to halt the decline in standards. Teaching is improving. Children in the current Reception classes are making strong progress from their various starting points, some of which are well below those seen typically. Pupils across key stage 1 are making at least expected progress in reading and mathematics. Progress in writing is very strong indeed.

- Leaders have put actions in place to improve the teaching of phonics this year. Teachers are committed to teaching phonics and some do it very well and help pupils to make good progress. However, there is some evidence of weak subject knowledge in some classes. Leaders recognise that they must tackle this swiftly in order to improve outcomes for pupils further.
- The most able pupils, including those who are disadvantaged, are making at least expected progress in reading, writing and mathematics. However, books show that occasionally they are not challenged to achieve what they are capable of, particularly in mathematics. Sometimes in reading lessons the books that pupils are given to read do not challenge them or help them make rapid progress in applying their phonics skills in key stage 1 or in developing deeper, critical understanding in key stage 2.
- Children at the earliest stages of learning to read in Year 1 are given books which help them to apply their developing phonic knowledge on continuous text. In other year groups, teachers occasionally select texts for the least able readers which do not meet their needs so specifically. This has an impact on the progress that they make. Leaders have identified that they need to review resourcing and provision to make sure that the least able readers make rapid progress and catch up with their classmates.
- Leaders have put in place a wide range of actions and strategies to improve attendance and reduce the incidence of exclusion. Pupils respond well to a range of rewards and incentives. Attendance remains very slightly below the national average. However, the school has a number of families who are living in extremely complex circumstances. This has a negative impact on the attendance rates which do not give a true indication of the impact of the excellent work undertaken by you and the staff, to improve attendance. The incidence of exclusion has reduced significantly this academic year.

Next steps for the school

Leaders and those responsible for governance should ensure that:

- teaching results in a higher proportion of the most able pupils, including those who are disadvantaged, making rapid progress in reading, writing and mathematics in all year groups across the school
- teachers receive training to develop their subject knowledge and confidence in teaching phonics
- the strongest practice which leads to some pupils making rapid progress in their reading is shared across all year groups and classes.

I am copying this letter to the chair of the governing body, the regional schools

commissioner and the director of children's services for Southwark. This letter will be published on the Ofsted website.

Yours sincerely

Ruth Dollner
Her Majesty's Inspector

Information about the inspection

The inspector agreed to prioritise the following areas with the school at the start of the inspection:

- the actions leaders have taken to support teachers in improving achievement by the end of the Reception Year and in key stage 1
- the actions leaders have taken to improve the progress of the most able pupils, including those who are disadvantaged
- the effectiveness of safeguarding in the school
- the actions leaders have taken to improve attendance and reduce the incidence of persistent absence and exclusion.

During the inspection I held meetings with you, your senior leaders and three of your governors. I met with a representative of the local authority. I visited all classrooms with you or your senior leaders and observed learning. I talked to pupils in lessons, during reading time, and as they moved around the building. I evaluated recent information about pupils' achievement. I looked at your records for keeping pupils safe, your policies and other documents. I spoke with parents at the start of the day and I reviewed your recent survey on their views. I also considered the 40 responses to the online parent questionnaire.