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Sandra Fuller
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Dear Mrs Fuller

Short inspection of Downe Primary School

Following my visit to the school on 21 March 2017, 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 October 2011.

This school continues to be good.

The leadership team has maintained the good quality of education in the school since the last inspection.

The leadership team has remained the same since the previous inspection. You work closely together with the assistant headteacher and other leaders to identify the key issues and strengths of the school. The school improvement plan is focused sharply on your accurate understanding of what the school needs to develop further. For example, you have improved the effectiveness of middle leaders and the quality of teaching and learning across the school.

The school is currently in discussion with other schools about establishing a more formal working collaboration through a multi-academy trust. You and the governors are realistic about the need to plan carefully for this conversion and the need to evaluate the impact of a potential increased workload on leaders' capacity. You have a clear vision for the school's future. You are ambitious for improving further outcomes for all pupils.

The assistant headteacher supports you well. He is the Year 6 class teacher and provides an effective model for other teachers across the school. He is also the mathematics leader and is working with the English leader to improve teaching across the school. You have worked with external advisers to improve the quality

of teaching still further. As a result, the progress pupils make in writing across the school has increased.

You, together with your team, have made progress towards addressing the areas for improvement identified at the previous inspection. You have developed the early years outside area. Children were observed making good use of the different areas to develop writing, act out stories through role play and build towers of different heights with building blocks. Progress in mathematics for the pupils leaving Year 6 in 2016 was in line with the national average. Pupils talk confidently about using information technology and they understand how to keep themselves safe online.

You regularly check the progress of every pupil at the school and you have a detailed knowledge of their strengths and areas to improve. You hold teachers to account for the progress of each pupil through regular meetings. You have reviewed the use of the school assessment system so as to better identify pupils who are not making the expected progress. The teachers adapt their plans and teaching to better meet the pupils' needs. In pupils' books, there is evidence of pupils making further progress.

Pupils are courteous, well-mannered and welcoming. Their behaviour around the school is good. From our joint visits to classrooms and discussions with pupils, it is clear that pupils understand the school's expectations. Pupils listen carefully to teachers and remain focused on their learning. Pupils told me that, on the few occasions when their peers behave inappropriately, adults intervene effectively to ensure that school expectations are maintained. There have been no exclusions over the last three years.

Members of the governing body have an accurate knowledge of the school's strengths and areas for improvement. They are focused on improving the standards of writing to replicate the success in reading and mathematics. They receive regular reports from you about the school's improvement actions and ask challenging questions about how pupils are progressing and attaining in their learning.

Safeguarding is effective.

Staff take their safeguarding responsibilities seriously. Staff and governors have all attended up-to-date safeguarding training, which has included issues surrounding radicalisation and extremism. You update staff regularly on changes of policy and practice, and they know what to do if they have a concern about a child.

Pupils are taught how to keep safe online and about cyber issues, such as cyber bullying. There is a prominent display in the entrance to the school promoting the importance of safeguarding at the school. As a result of the school's safeguarding culture, pupils say that they feel safe and know who to speak to if they have any concerns.

The chair of the governing body regularly checks safer recruitment documents. However, although staff and governors apply the Secretary of State's latest statutory guidance effectively, for example 'Keeping children safe in education', school policies were not based on the most recent guidance at the start of this inspection. By the end of the inspection, leaders had ensured that the policies were up to date.

Inspection findings

- Attendance in 2016 was in line with the national average. However, the attendance of boys, disadvantaged pupils and pupils who have special educational needs and/or disabilities was below average. You have a detailed knowledge of the families of pupils whose attendance is of concern and are working effectively to improve this further. You send out letters to parents and, where necessary, take more formal action. As a result, the current attendance for these groups has improved and is now in line with or above national averages.
- The mathematics and English leaders are working alongside the early years and key stage 1 teachers to further improve the quality of teaching. This has raised teachers' expectations. Consequently, there is evidence that pupils are on track to exceed the standards expected in Year 2 in 2016. These higher expectations were evident, for example, in Year 2 science. Over time, pupils have been able to write their scientific ideas at the same standard observed in their English books.
- You have increased the time spent on the focused teaching of phonics in Reception, Year 1 and Year 2. This has had a positive impact on pupils' progress over time. Consequently, in 2016, a higher percentage of pupils in Year 1 met the expected level. By the end of Year 2, the difference between the outcomes of disadvantaged pupils and other pupils nationally has diminished.
- In 2016, the proportion of children in the early years who achieved a good level of writing was below the national average. You and your leaders have benefited from the advice of an early years consultant and, consequently, there have been improvements to the teaching of writing. In Reception, the direct teaching of letter formation and fine motor skills has contributed to the increase in progress that children make.
- At the end of key stage 1, the proportion of pupils achieving the national expected level was just below average in writing. The systematic teaching of handwriting and spelling in key stage 1 is evident by the increase in progression made by pupils in their books.
- At key stage 2, teachers are ensuring that pupils' progress is improving steadily. Most pupils' work is at least in line with that seen nationally and an increasing number are above average in reading, writing and mathematics.
- Leaders have planned and are implementing actions to accelerate the progress of writing so that outcomes are in line with the national expectations at key stage 1 and more pupils at the end of key stage 2 are exceeding the national expectations.

- Current school performance information confirms that most pupils are on track to achieve at least the age-related expectations in reading, writing and mathematics in most year groups. Work in pupils' books confirmed that there is a positive impact on securing higher levels of writing across the school.
- The leader of English has a clear understanding of the need to develop assessment further to identify what children need to learn and how to teach specific writing skills. Middle leaders are using examples from the effective teaching of mathematics as a guide for improving the teaching of writing.
- You and your leadership team use information about pupils' progress and attainment and the quality of teaching to generate an accurate evaluation of the school's performance. Middle leaders monitor the quality of teaching through regular scrutiny of pupils' work and guide teachers to reshape their planning. Nonetheless, you do not hold middle leaders fully to account for improving the quality of teaching and pupils' achievements.

Next steps for the school

Leaders and those responsible for governance should ensure that:

- all pupils make consistently good progress in writing, so that more pupils exceed the national standard at the end of key stage 2
- middle leaders regularly and systematically measure the impact of improvements to the quality of teaching against pupils' outcomes
- safeguarding policies match the procedures and practice at the school and reflect statutory guidance from the Department for Education.

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

Yours sincerely

Simon Knowles
Ofsted Inspector

Information about the inspection

During the inspection I met with you, the assistant headteacher and governors. I met with a representative from the local authority. I met with one parent. I also met the senior administrator and the designated safeguarding lead. I met a group of pupils from Year 2 and spoke to other pupils in their classrooms. I met with the leaders of English, mathematics and special educational needs support. You and I observed teaching and learning in all year groups and looked at samples of work. I considered the views of the 23 parents who responded to Ofsted's online survey,

Parent View. A number of documents were scrutinised, including leaders' evaluation of the school's effectiveness, the school improvement plan and documents relating to safeguarding and attendance. I scrutinised the school's documents relating to the views of parents, pupils and staff.