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Mrs Samantha Leir
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Dear Mrs Leir

Short inspection of The Russell Primary School

Following my visit to the school on 1 May 2018, 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 April 2014.

This school continues to be good.

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

You have worked with leaders at all levels, including governors, to successfully bring about clear improvements in the quality of teaching. You have effectively used a range of professional development opportunities to raise teachers' expectations and to help all staff understand the key features of high-quality reading, writing and mathematics teaching. Staff use their in-depth understanding to teach with confidence, clarity and ambition. Assessment information about pupils is used well to help sustain this improvement and deliver effective feedback. You hold teachers accountable for the progress pupils make, and provide early support for any pupil at risk of underachieving. Staff who provide additional support help pupils keep up with the demands of learning.

Inspection evidence confirms that learning in the early years and Years 1 and 2 has continued to improve. Published assessment information indicates that rates of progress from Years 3 to 6 have not always been good since the previous inspection. However, progress in reading showed a strong improvement in 2017. Rates of progress in writing and mathematics have improved over the current year and are now closer to the strong progress almost all pupils make in reading. Most-able pupils are making better progress in reading, writing and mathematics compared to the outcomes for this group in 2017. Disadvantaged pupils learn well, as do most pupils who have special educational needs and/or disabilities.

You have firmly established improved practice in the early years and in Years 1 and 2. It is also increasingly evident in teaching in Years 3 to 6. You, the governors and your staff understand the school's strengths and agree about what more needs to be done to develop high rates of progress even more widely. From Year 3 to Year 6, you are continuing to reduce the remaining variability in pupils' progress in writing. You have identified the need to extend the improvements made in the teaching of number and calculation and shape and space skills to all aspects of the mathematics curriculum, including algebra, fractions and handling data.

Your school is an inclusive and welcoming environment where pupils are well supported with their learning and well-being. Leaders at all levels, including governors, know the school well. Leaders, including middle and subject leaders, work alongside you with strong commitment and energy to plan and implement improvements that become firmly established throughout the school. Pupils say that they enjoy school because learning activities are interesting and varied. They value the support that teachers provide and, along with the staff, are proud of their school. Pupils are ambitious and work hard. They understand that their hard work is an investment in their future, as well as enhancing the enjoyment of learning. Parents and carers support the school well.

Safeguarding is effective.

The leadership team has ensured that all safeguarding arrangements are fit for purpose and records are detailed and of high quality. Leaders provide regular and up-to-date training to help all staff identify the potential risks to pupils and be able to act promptly. Staff understand the school's procedures for reporting concerns well. Frequent and appropriately shared information helps leaders and teachers identify safeguarding issues and put in place timely responses. Through different subjects, pupils learn about managing their own safety. For example, pupils have a good understanding of most risks related to using the internet. Governors have a clear understanding of the school's duty to safeguard pupils. They check that staff understand the school's procedures and the risks pupils can be exposed to in the wider world. Governors work closely with leaders to help promote a culture of safety that involves everybody associated with the school. There are training sessions for parents so that important messages about safety are reinforced at home. Pupils, parents and staff all agree that the school is a safe place. Incidents of bullying are rare and dealt with promptly to ensure that pupils continue to learn happily and to the best of their abilities.

Inspection findings

- One focus for this inspection was to find out how leaders' actions have increased the rate of progress in reading in the key stage 2 published progress measures, from being average overall for two years to well above average in 2017.
- You have provided training for staff to effectively strengthen their understanding of how pupils learn to read. As a result, teachers across the school are more confident and skilful in their planning of learning activities to develop pupils' reading skills. Pupils have a wider choice of reading texts and they say that the

school now stocks books that interest them. Pupils read more often because they enjoy reading. Teachers make sure that pupils understand the key vocabulary to deepen their comprehension of texts. Pupils use their wider vocabulary both in discussions and in their writing. Pupils who require additional intervention to keep up with their peers are helped effectively. Support staff work closely with teachers so that they know how to provide specific help and guidance to meet pupils' needs.

- The carefully structured approach to reading has been applied across the school. Children in the early years develop their knowledge and skills in phonics and, by the end of Year 2, most pupils can read basic texts confidently. Most can confidently discuss what they have understood from their reading. Those pupils who are ready to read more complex texts are provided with opportunities to do so.
- The second focus for this inspection was how well pupils make progress in writing. Published assessment information for 2017, and leaders' own views, confirmed that progress in writing has been broadly average.
- The quality of writing observed in the books of most current pupils shows that they are making stronger progress than indicated by published information in 2017. This clear improvement in pupils' writing is the result of leaders' actions to develop writing skills, particularly from the early years to Year 2. The impact of this focus is increasingly evident in pupils' writing from Year 3 to Year 6. Scrutiny of work and lesson observations during the inspection confirm that your assessments and evaluation are accurate.
- Work in books confirms that there are regular opportunities for pupils to write at length about ideas that interest them. Pupils use a wide range of vocabulary, write for different purposes and use teachers' feedback to improve the quality of their work. As a result, most pupils write well and examples of high-quality writing are increasing, for example in pupils' work about the Tudors.
- We agreed that pupils' progress in writing, while clearly better than the published outcomes of 2017, still has some variability. The written explanations of their thinking and investigations in science did not include enough subject-specific and technical language. A minority of pupils still require further practice and support to improve the presentation of their written work.
- The third focus for this inspection was how well pupils are progressing in mathematics compared to the published assessment information in 2017. Leaders were aware that progress in mathematics had been broadly average compared to other schools nationally.
- Your clear focus on developing pupils' knowledge and skills in number, calculation and shape, space and measure has increased the rate of progress in these areas. Pupils also develop the understanding to explain their reasoning when solving problems. Most pupils can apply their mathematical skills and understanding at school and in their homework. Pupils in Years 3 and 4 are now better prepared for the increased challenges of learning in mathematics in Years 5 and 6.
- Staff have valued their professional development on how to help pupils to understand the relationships between numbers and use them for future learning.

This development has helped staff to increase the challenge and focus within their teaching. Pupils' progress in algebra, fractions and handling data is not as strong as in other aspects of mathematics. Leaders have plans in place to develop pupils' progress across the whole mathematics curriculum.

Next steps for the school

Leaders and those responsible for governance should ensure that:

- rates of progress in writing continue to improve so that they more closely match those in reading
- the development of pupils' skills and understanding in algebra, fractions and data handling is as strong as in other aspects of mathematics.

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

Yours sincerely

Mehar Brar
Ofsted Inspector

Information about the inspection

During this inspection, I met with you, the senior leadership team and three governors, including the chair of governors. I spoke with a representative of the local authority. I met with a group of staff and a group of pupils. I also considered 51 responses to Parent View, Ofsted's online survey, and examined 77 responses from pupils and 25 responses from staff to Ofsted's online surveys. I visited lessons jointly with you to observe learning and scrutinise pupils' work. I checked a range of documentation related to safeguarding and the school's website. I evaluated further documentation, including the school's self-evaluation and improvement plans, minutes of the governing body's meetings and the school's own assessment information.