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13 March 2017

Ms Nina Achenbach
Headteacher
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Dear Ms Achenbach

Short inspection of Whitehorse Manor Junior School

Following my visit to the school on 08 February 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 July 2012.

This school continues to be good.

The leadership team has maintained the good quality of education in the school since the last inspection. School leaders and representatives of the multi-academy trust, of which you are a member, have an accurate picture of the school's strengths and weaknesses. You know what to focus on first in order to make further improvements. Senior and middle leaders use information skilfully to decide on actions aimed at improving the progress of different groups of pupils. They monitor the quality of teaching rigorously. At the same time, you ensure that these high levels of accountability do not diminish the positive working atmosphere which is a hallmark of the school. This was very evident from the happy faces of pupils and their commitment to learning in classes I visited with you.

You have acted effectively in response to the area for improvement identified at the last inspection. You have ensured that there is a greater consistency in the quality of teaching, despite a number of staff changes which you have needed to manage since the last inspection. For example, you insist that teachers should expect more of pupils working at attainment levels typical for their age in mathematics when using and applying their skills. You review teaching policies, communicate changes clearly and back this up with effective training. This ensures that teachers are consistently improving rates of progress for these pupils in the current year. The consistency with which teachers help pupils develop their basic skills in the wider curriculum is also a strength of the school.

Partnerships between trust directors, academy council members and external professionals provide effective collaborative challenge and support for leadership. This enables you to choose how to spend additional funds for disadvantaged pupils effectively. For example, I found that boys entitled to this funding who were weaker readers on arrival are making good progress as a result of your decisions. You share an honest and well-informed view of what needs to be done further to encourage more pupils and parents to make even greater commitment to reading at home as well as in school. You also recognise that some pupils need to acquire greater resilience and skills in their use of technical language when applying their skills in mathematics.

Parents, pupils and members of staff are consistently positive about the impact of your leadership. The positive 'can-do' attitude and joined-up thinking evident in the culture of the school is testimony to the impact of your work over time.

Safeguarding is effective.

The leadership team has ensured that all safeguarding arrangements are fit for purpose and records are detailed and of high quality. Arrangements for the checks on the suitability of staff are robust. You review and update training arrangements thoroughly to take account of current guidance and your knowledge of specific risks which pupils may encounter. For example, you remain vigilant to the risk of pupils being drawn into gang culture and ensure that all staff are alert to looking out for signs of abuse. Procedures for reporting concerns are clearly understood and implemented well. Pupils say they feel safe and can explain how the school has shown them how to look after themselves when they are less closely supervised outside school. For example, older pupils can describe particular prompts for remembering how to stay safe when using public transport. They understand how to protect their identity if they use social media and the internet.

Communication with parents is strong. Your staff are skilled at engendering high levels of trust. This enables you to discuss concerns frankly and identify concerns early. You go the extra mile to provide advice and help when parents or pupils need support.

Inspection findings

- Provisional information for 2016 indicates that pupils' progress in reading is similar to national averages. However, pupils with weaker starting points, and particularly disadvantaged boys, have been making less progress than others. You have recognised this and we agreed that current progress in reading for lower prior-attaining pupils should be a focus for this short inspection.
- The least able boys in Year 3 who read to me use phonics skills well to tackle books which are more difficult than those they could read at the beginning of the year. Assessments completed by teachers are thorough and checked for accuracy. They indicate that pupils can understand a wider range of features of books they read as a result of their good progress. The use of particular books to inspire boys is beginning to have an impact on their enthusiasm for reading.

The least able boys are also motivated to read more because of the skilful way teachers weave reading opportunities into other lessons. For example, pupils told me how they had used books to find out about life in Victorian London. However, some pupils do not demonstrate a strong commitment to reading at home. Teachers all use the same reading record books but do so in different ways with varying levels of commitment from pupils and parents. You recognise that this remains a priority for further action.

- The most able readers, including the most able disadvantaged, have been convinced of the merits of reading for pleasure. They have established preferences for the type of books they enjoy but teachers have also ensured that they remain open to tackling more challenging texts, especially with support. They told me that they feel more challenged in reading lessons.
- You have recognised that pupils' progress in mathematics has been weaker than in reading and writing. We agreed to examine the impact of your work on improving pupils' progress from average starting points. This was the group with the weakest rate of progress in the provisional 2016 outcomes for the end of key stage 2.
- Your leader for mathematics has wasted no time in addressing this issue. He has used additional training and resources provided by the academy trust effectively to enable teachers to set more challenging work for this group. Work seen in books, particularly in the current term, demonstrates more rapid progress of pupils who are working at age-related expectations. Teachers understand what pupils can achieve in explaining patterns and relationships in mathematics more accurately. They expect more of pupils when explaining their reasoning. This reveals pupils' misconceptions more accurately and allows teachers to correct these promptly. There are good examples of this work across the range of mathematical topics.
- Teachers ensure that appropriate apparatus and practical materials help pupils understand ideas behind mathematics more effectively. This is a result of the training provided and your expectations of how ingenious teachers should be when explaining how pupils can use these resources.
- Some pupils I spoke to have a limited ability to explain their work using mathematical vocabulary. The work I saw in pupils' books indicates that pupils are at different stages of developing resilience to overcoming challenges in applying their mathematical skills to solve problems.
- A third line of enquiry was to consider provision for pupils from a Black Caribbean background who have special educational needs and/or disabilities. The school has a high proportion of pupils in this group.

- Teachers and additional adults support these pupils skilfully. Those who have difficulties managing their behaviour or developing positive attitudes are supported well to increase their resilience and to engage with learning. Teachers and support staff seen during our tour of the school use resources skilfully to enable pupils to complete calculations accurately in mathematics. They ensure that books are provided at a level of challenge and interest which support their progress. Funding available for those who are disadvantaged is spent effectively because this group make good progress from their varying starting points consistently over time.

Next steps for the school

Leaders and governors should ensure that:

- work continues to further encourage pupils and their parents to develop reading skills and attitudes when reading at home and in school
- teachers continue to focus on building the resilience of pupils when applying mathematical skills to problem solving and developing their mathematical vocabulary.

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

Yours sincerely

Andrew Wright
Her Majesty's Inspector

Information about the inspection

I held discussions with senior leaders about their work. I spoke to the leader responsible for mathematics. I also met three of the academy trust directors and two members of the academy council. I visited classes in each year group with the headteacher. I also visited the school's annex where some pupils in Years 3 and 4 are educated. I heard pupils of different abilities read and looked at a range of pupils' work, particularly in reading and mathematics. I scrutinised documents related to safeguarding and school improvement. Responses to Ofsted's online questionnaire, Parent View, were taken into account alongside the school's own surveys of parents' and pupils' views.