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Mr Charlie King
Headteacher
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Dear Mr King

Short inspection of Plaistow and Kirdford Primary School

Following my visit to the school on 11 February 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 October 2010.

This school continues to be good.

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

Since your arrival in 2014, you have made a real impact in establishing clear priorities to bring about further improvement. You and governors have a continuous focus on high standards and you communicate clearly to the whole school community the importance of living by the school's mantra, 'believe, achieve, succeed'.

You have given staff the confidence and drive to move the school on together. They are a united team who feel valued and motivated to match the high expectations you have set. You have maintained the capacity of the staff by recruiting new colleagues with fresh ideas and approaches. Additionally, you have enabled established staff to continue to develop their leadership skills and to share their expertise. Importantly, you have created more leadership capacity in the school through the appointment of a deputy headteacher and a new leader of mathematics.

Parents value highly the new ways that the school involves them in their children's education. They speak positively of the reinvigorated communication between the school and parents, created by your open and inclusive approach. As one parent explained, 'As parents we feel our voices are heard and our comments taken on board and we're working as a team to give our children a happy and supportive learning experience.'

Since the previous inspection, standards at Key Stage 2 have remained high and pupils make good and sometimes better progress. Pupils achieve well in reading, writing and mathematics. You are rightly focusing your attention now on raising pupils' achievement in reading in Key Stage 1. Leaders have introduced effective changes to the way reading is taught. Recent workshops and guidance for parents help them to support their children's reading at home. Older pupils are motivated to read regularly.

Appropriate action has been taken to address the areas identified as needing improvement at the last inspection. Leaders have a much sharper focus on checking pupils' progress and learning. Teachers now explain very clearly to pupils what they need to do to be successful and pupils benefit from useful feedback about how to improve future work. Close links with schools in East London and Kenya are used effectively to help pupils understand lifestyles and experiences that are different from their own. To support further improvement, leaders should ensure that newly appointed middle leaders benefit from wider training and support to extend their skills. Additionally, the range of resources in the outdoors area of the early years requires further development to better support children's learning.

Safeguarding is effective.

The leadership team has ensured that all safeguarding arrangements are fit for purpose and records are detailed and of a high quality. You and your staff believe it is very important to keep pupils safe. You ensure that staff are well trained to understand the warning signs of potential abuse. You work closely with external agencies and you are not afraid to seek guidance or take things further when you feel it is appropriate. Pupils identified as 'at risk' are carefully monitored. Pupils say they feel safe in school and trust the adults who care for them. Parents who responded to Parent View (Ofsted's online survey) agree. Attendance remains above average. School records show that there are very few incidents of poor behaviour and on the few occasions they occur, staff act swiftly and appropriately.

Inspection findings

- You have got to know the school and its community well since your appointment. You have successfully communicated your goals and priorities for further improvements to your colleagues. You use your evaluations wisely to shape well-considered plans for the future. As a result, there is a shared vision by staff and governors to develop pupils who are global citizens of the future who achieve their potential.

- Governors have a secure understanding of the strengths of the school and what needs to be done to improve further. They carry out a rigorous programme of monitoring to check the impact of the school's work. Their detailed plan helps them to ensure that they keep a strategic overview of all aspects of school life. They use their wide range of skills and experience appropriately to challenge and support leaders effectively.
- You have rightly restructured the leadership team with the addition of a deputy headteacher. This means that improvements to the school do not all have to rest with you. The leader for mathematics is new to post and she is beginning to drive improvements that are relevant to the school, for example by engendering a love of mathematics by girls through the 'mums and maths session'. However, to develop these leaders' skills further, they would benefit from training that draws on experience and expertise from beyond the school.
- Standards in reading at Key Stage 1 are rising, because you have strengthened teaching. For example, guided reading sessions are more structured and closely matched to pupils' needs. Teachers and teaching assistants use questioning effectively to check and develop pupils' understanding of texts. The profile and importance of reading skills are being raised effectively and pupils are developing a love of reading, for example, pupils talked enthusiastically about the 'hot reads' recommended to them by staff. Records show that pupils read at home and at school frequently. As a result, pupils are making good progress in reading.
- While the proportions of children achieving a good level of development at the end of the Reception Year are close to or above national averages, current pupils are on course to achieve more highly. Children work purposefully, and apply previous learning successfully to solve new problems. For example, children used their knowledge of counting using a number line well to add up different amounts of money. The outdoor area does not support pupils' learning as effectively as that indoors because the range of resources is not developed well enough.
- You are tracking pupils' achievement effectively and holding teachers to account for the progress that pupils make in their class. You draw on a range of evidence including lesson visits and checks on pupils' books to monitor performance across the school.
- You have established close working relationships with schools in Plaistow, East London and in Kenya. As a result, pupils' horizons have been broadened. They have a good understanding of how people's lives and backgrounds can be similar and different from their own. Pupils enjoy communicating with and, in the case of the school in East London, visiting their contemporaries to learn about their community.

- Pupils behave well, are enthusiastic and work hard. They work well together to take turns and share ideas maturely. Outdoor learning, for example, through Forest School helps them to develop good team work skills and to understand and respect the environment around them.

Next steps for the school

Leaders and those responsible for governance should ensure that:

- children's learning in the early years is improved by better provision outdoors
- the skills of middle leaders are further enhanced by providing more external training and support.

I am copying this letter to the Chair of the Governing Body, the Regional Schools Commissioner and the Director of Children's Services for West Sussex County Council. This letter will be published on the Ofsted website.

Yours sincerely

Lisa Moore
Her Majesty's Inspector

Information about the inspection

I met with you, subject leaders for English and mathematics, a group of pupils, a group of staff including newly qualified teachers, and members of the governing body. I met with a representative of the local authority. I spoke with parents at the end of the day and with pupils at different times during the inspection, including breaktime. I heard some pupils read. I considered the 44 responses to Parent View (Ofsted's online questionnaire), the comments provided by 29 text messages, the 45 responses to the pupil survey, and views expressed by 17 staff. I visited a number of classrooms with you to speak to pupils, look at their work and observe their learning. I visited a Year 1 class working in the local woods as part of Forest School. I evaluated a range of documents, including the school's self-evaluation, development plan and safeguarding records. During the inspection Year 5 were out of school on a trip.