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Miss Sarah Neary
Headteacher
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Dear Miss Neary

Short inspection of Elmgrove Primary School & Nursery

Following my visit to the school on 21 November 2017 with Sarah Jones, Ofsted Inspector, 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 November 2012.

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 appointment as headteacher in September 2017, you have provided stable leadership for teachers and staff. You have strengthened the leadership team and raised the quality of teaching through coaching and mentoring, and looking at effective practice elsewhere. You deploy members of the senior leadership team to support teaching and learning in the classrooms to ensure that pupils make progress. You seek collaboration with other schools by providing them with support as the local authority's maths hub. You are also seeking to establish cross-school moderation of writing within the borough.

The school is a calm and nurturing environment where staff help pupils to develop well. Pupils enjoy being at the school and their learning. The overwhelming majority of parents think that the school provides a very good standard of education. They particularly appreciate the caring culture that allows their children to thrive. They say Elmgrove Primary School celebrates the diversity of its children. One parent whose child joined the school recently from overseas said: 'The teachers know what children of this age need and they pay attention to their individual personalities.'

School leaders have identified the correct priorities for the next stage of improvement and are taking the right steps to address them. You know that the most able pupils, including the most able disadvantaged pupils, will only make rapid progress in lessons if they are

stretched and challenged. Leaders are providing teachers with effective support to achieve this. As a result, the most able pupils, including the most able disadvantaged, achieve high standards in mathematics and writing. However, you recognise that there is still some work to be done to support your most-able readers.

The governing body provides leaders with effective support and challenge. They know the areas the school leaders need to act on for improvement. They fulfil their strategic role effectively. Records of the work of governors show good examples of where leaders are challenged and held to account. Governors who are linked with subject leaders demonstrate a strong understanding of specific areas of the school. This knowledge contributes to your school's accurate self-evaluation.

Safeguarding is effective.

The deputy headteacher is the designated safeguarding lead and has been so for over 10 years. This stability strengthens this aspect of the school's work. All safeguarding arrangements meet statutory requirements. Records are detailed, up to date, and fit for purpose. School leaders and staff know their pupils very well. They use this knowledge to shape the most appropriate and effective support for families. One foster carer said she wished there were 'more places like this which are so child-focused'.

There is a clear expectation and agreement that all staff and governors have a collective responsibility to keep pupils safe and secure. Training has been undertaken at the appropriate level and is up to date. As a result, all staff have a good understanding of safeguarding procedures.

The curriculum is effective in helping pupils to stay safe. For example, school leaders have put in a place an online safety scheme, developed by school staff. Consequently, pupils show a strong awareness of the dangers on the internet. They know how to keep themselves safe at home, at school, or online. Their behaviour in and out of lessons is exemplary.

Inspection findings

- In our initial discussion we identified the achievement of pupils, including of disadvantaged pupils, in reading as a key line of enquiry. This was because, in 2016 and 2017, achievement in reading was below the national average. School leaders have wasted no time in identifying those areas that need to be addressed to improve reading across the school. They are aware that while pupils are fluent at reading and decoding texts, their comprehension skills need further development. You responded to this by providing pupils plenty of opportunities to develop the more sophisticated reading skills of deduction and inference. This resulted in improvements to the quality of pupils' responses to comprehension questions.
- Visits to lessons showed that staff ask pupils questions that help them think about the texts they read. Teachers also provide pupils with clear guidance to help them decide which of their reading skills will enable them to answer questions successfully. Pupils read with fluency and expression. They display a genuine love for reading, offering insights about plots and characters.

- However, teachers are not yet consistent in enabling pupils to think more deeply about what they are reading. Sometimes, teachers use texts that are not challenging enough to allow for pupils to explore further and deeper. As a consequence, the most able readers do not always demonstrate progress towards achieving greater depth in their learning.
- We also looked at the teaching of writing across key stage 2. This was because, in 2017, pupils who are most able, including the most able disadvantaged, did not make the rate of progress expected of them. We looked at how effectively pupils are challenged to achieve the highest standard in writing. School leaders acted quickly to improve writing across the school. Teachers now give pupils plenty of opportunities to practise and consolidate writing skills. Work in books reflects teachers' high expectations of the standards of grammar, spelling, and punctuation pupils produce. Pupils are able to use and apply these skills accurately when writing at length.
- Writing is also used effectively across the curriculum to develop pupils' skills and understanding of writing for different purposes. For example, pupils in Year 6 produced poems about the circulatory system which they were learning about in science. As a result of your focus in this area, pupils' achievement in writing has risen across the school. Scrutiny of pupils' books show that the most able pupils, including the most able disadvantaged, are producing writing which shows greater depth.
- Another line of enquiry focused on the teaching of mathematics. Again, this was because in 2017 the most able, including the most able disadvantaged, made slower progress than pupils with the same starting points nationally. Mathematics is now a real strength of the school. Teachers have good subject knowledge and high expectations of pupils. Work in books shows that pupils are able to apply their skills and knowledge to solve numerical and practical problems. Pupils talk about the mathematics they are learning with genuine enthusiasm and excitement.
- The most able pupils, including the most able disadvantaged pupils, are articulate learners of mathematics. They are confident when talking about the approaches they choose to solve investigative problems. Pupils regularly receive appropriate challenge in mathematics. They demonstrate a deep understanding of concepts and a good proportion of them achieve at greater depth. This strength is recognised by the local authority, designating the school as a mathematics hub to support other schools.
- The final line of enquiry asked whether leaders are taking appropriate action to improve pupils' attendance. Published attendance data shows that overall pupils' attendance is below the national average. Close examination of the information highlights that in 2016 disadvantaged pupils and pupils who have special educational needs and/or disabilities attended much less frequently than other pupils nationally. These groups with the lowest attendance rates also have the highest rates of persistent absence.
- We agreed that systems to monitor attendance in your school are thorough and help families to understand the importance of good attendance. You have established effective systems to check pupils' attendance. You know pupils and families well and work closely with them. You are keen to seek out support from external agencies when necessary. As a result of these targeted actions, attendance has been improving and is now on track to be at least in line with the national average.

Next steps for the school

Leaders and those responsible for governance should ensure that:

- the most able, including the most able disadvantaged pupils, are stretched and challenged enough so that they reach greater depth standards in reading.

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

Yours sincerely

Edison David
Ofsted Inspector

Information about the inspection

During this short inspection, we discussed the work of the school with you, the deputy headteacher, the assistant headteachers, and the middle leaders. We also considered responses to Parent View, the pupil survey and the staff survey. We spoke to a number of pupils to discuss their experiences in lessons, the extent to which they feel safe, and also their views on learning and behaviour in general. We held discussions with the local authority's representative. We met with members of the governing body, including the chair of governors, who were able to provide additional information. We also considered documentation provided by the school and information posted on the school's website. We looked at checks made on the suitability of staff, and the analysis of pupils' attendance. Together with school leaders, we visited classes to observe learning and we looked at samples of pupils' work in reading, writing and mathematics. We listened to reading by pupils of different abilities.