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Mrs Janet Berry
Headteacher
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Dear Mrs Berry

Short inspection of Coombe Hill Infant School

Following my visit to the school on 20 March 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 December 2013.

This school continues to be good.

The leadership team has maintained the good quality of education in the school since the last inspection. You are a strong and determined leader who knows the school's performance well. You and your deputy headteacher have accurately identified the key strengths of the school and the right priorities to ensure further improvement.

You have dealt effectively with the areas for improvement identified at the last inspection. Leaders have ensured that pupils are challenged and fully engaged in their learning. Teachers have received training on the types of questions they should ask pupils to extend and deepen their learning. Consequently, staff are confident and clear about how to demand more of pupils and to get them to think hard, so that they make strong progress.

Similarly, you have introduced an assessment system that enables leaders to monitor and track pupils' progress carefully. This information is communicated effectively to all leaders, teachers and teaching assistants. Teachers take ownership of this assessment information and use it well to design learning tasks. Where necessary, they put in place additional support and interventions to meet the needs of all pupils.

A significant number of parents and carers responded to Ofsted's online survey, Parent View. An overwhelming majority of parents say that the school is well led and managed. Parents recognise and value leaders' work. Typical comments received from parents during this inspection include: 'The headteacher and the

whole management team are very approachable and always aim to ensure the school progresses.' The vast majority of those who responded say that they would recommend this school to another parent.

Classroom environments are vibrant and motivate pupils in their learning. Pupils' work in a range of subjects is displayed attractively in classes and around the school. This boosts pupils' self-esteem and confidence as learners because they can see that they are valued.

You have accurately identified the improvement of pupils' outcomes in writing as a top priority. You and your deputy headteacher acknowledge that the most able pupils, including those who are disadvantaged, are not challenged sufficiently to make even better progress in writing. Occasionally, these pupils are not encouraged to use their writing skills well to write in a wide range of subjects, including English.

Safeguarding is effective.

The leadership team has ensured that all safeguarding arrangements are fit for purpose. The designated safeguarding lead maintains high-quality records on pupils whose circumstances make them vulnerable. Leaders work closely with external agencies to ensure pupils' safety and well-being.

Leaders have created a strong culture of vigilance to safeguard pupils from the risk of potential harm. There are posters displayed in prominent places around the school providing information on who to contact, should anyone need to raise a concern about a pupil's safety and well-being. Staff are well trained to spot any changes in pupils' behaviour that may indicate that they are at risk of harm, including the risks associated with extremism and radicalisation.

All the parents responding to Parent View say that their children are happy, safe and well looked after at school. Pupils spoken to during the inspection reported that they feel safe. They are knowledgeable about how to keep themselves safe when using the internet, for example pupils know not to divulge personal information. Pupils say that bullying is a rare occurrence and they can talk to adults in the school who take their concerns seriously. Pupils appreciate that they can post their worries in the central 'worry box', and that their concerns will be listened to.

Inspection findings

- I began by evaluating leaders' actions to improve outcomes for disadvantaged pupils at key stage 1. In 2017, the proportion of disadvantaged pupils who attained the expected and greater depth standards in reading, writing and mathematics was below that of all pupils nationally. Their attainment in science, too, was below the national average.
- Leaders at all levels have correctly identified this as a priority and teachers have a greater strong focus on this group of pupils' learning. Additionally, you have recognised that, in the last two years, disadvantaged pupils' performance in the national assessments has been inconsistent and below the national averages.

Leaders and teachers carefully track and check disadvantaged pupils' progress in reading, writing and mathematics. They use this information well to put interventions in place to meet the needs of pupils identified as falling behind. As a result, most of these pupils are making good progress. This improvement must be sustained.

- The school's assessment information and work in pupils' books show that disadvantaged pupils are making strong progress in reading, writing and mathematics. Similarly, the work in these pupils' science folders shows that they are making good gains in acquiring scientific knowledge, skills and understanding, at the standard expected for their age.
- We chose to explore how well pupils at key stage 1 are developing their writing skills. Last year, the proportion of pupils at the end of key stage 1 who achieved the expected and greater depth standards in writing was below the national average. Pupils had not made sufficiently strong progress from their starting points at the end of early years foundation stage to meet the end of year expectations in writing, at the end of key stage 1.
- You and your leadership team have rightly identified the teaching of spellings as a priority for improvement. Teachers have received training on how best to teach spellings, and they share good practice among themselves. Simultaneously, you have introduced a reading programme throughout school, which motivates pupils to read and gives them ideas for writing. For example, in Year 1 classes, pupils used their imagination to ask questions in role play and subsequently wrote a letter to a character from a familiar text.
- Pupils use their basic writing skills well to write for a range of purposes and in different styles. Teachers regularly address pupils' errors in spelling, which pupils are expected to correct. The work in pupils' books shows that most pupils are making strong progress in their writing. However, the most able pupils, including the most able disadvantaged pupils, are not challenged consistently to write at a deeper level. Sometimes, pupils do not apply their basic writing skills well in other subjects, such as science, and class teachers' expectations are inconsistent. This prevents them from making even better progress.
- Finally, we focused on the effectiveness of leaders' actions to improve outcomes in phonics for pupils who have special educational needs and/or disabilities and pupils who speak English as an additional language. In 2017, the average mark for pupils who did not meet the expected standard in the phonics screening check at the end of Year 1 was very low.
- Leaders and teachers have correctly identified the need to provide additional support for these pupils. They have ensured that these pupils receive individual phonics teaching and interventions to meet their needs. Pupils use their phonics skills well to sound out and read unusual words. School assessment information and inspection evidence confirm that these pupils are making at least good progress in developing their phonic knowledge and skills.

Next steps for the school

Leaders and those responsible for governance should ensure that:

- teachers have consistently high expectations and challenge the most able pupils, including the most able disadvantaged pupils, so that more of them work at the greater depth standard in writing across the curriculum
- improvements in outcomes for disadvantaged pupils in all year groups are sustained and embedded in all subjects, including English and mathematics.

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

Yours sincerely

Rajeshree Mehta
Ofsted Inspector

Information about the inspection

During this inspection, I met with the headteacher, deputy headteacher, senior and middle leaders and three governors. I went on two learning walks with the headteacher and deputy headteacher, and we jointly scrutinised pupils' books, both within and outside of lessons. I spoke with pupils about their learning and experiences of school life. I listened to pupils read in lessons. I analysed the 138 responses to Parent View, 86 free-text responses and 32 staff survey responses. I scrutinised a wide range of the school's documentation, including the school's documentation relating to safeguarding and assessment information on pupils' progress and attainment.