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26 July 2018

Mrs Amanda Burrows
Headteacher
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Dear Mrs Burrows

Short inspection of Darley Dene Primary School

Following my visit to the school on 3 July 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 2014.

Based on the evidence gathered during this short inspection, I have identified some priorities for improvement which I advise the school to address. In light of these priorities, the school's next inspection will be a full section 5 inspection. **There is no change to the school's current overall effectiveness grade of good as a result of this inspection.**

Since the previous inspection, there has been a considerable turnover of staff at all levels. As a result of this, the school's overall performance has declined and pupils do not all achieve as well as they should. Although you and other leaders acted to bring about improvements, some of these actions have not had time to become embedded and take effect.

You, together with current leaders and a skilled governing body, are ambitious for the school. You have a broadly accurate view of what needs to be improved. However, some leaders have been overgenerous in their evaluation of outcomes for pupils and did not clearly identify some underachievement for pupils in Year 6 in 2017. Data for pupils who are currently in school presents a more promising picture, with a higher number of pupils expected to reach the expected standard in 2018.

Pupils like their school. They say that most teachers are kind and that they help them and treat them fairly and equally. Pupils particularly enjoy the improved grounds and equipment available to them at breaktime. Pupils know and understand the school's values very clearly and they say that most pupils abide by these values. They say that adults deal quickly and fairly with a very small minority of pupils who find it difficult to manage their behaviour. During the inspection, pupils behaved very well in class and when moving around the school. They are

polite, friendly and welcoming. While most pupils I spoke to felt that they were provided with challenging work, they said that it did not always happen in all classes. Some were not sure what they needed to do to improve their work.

The leadership of subjects has been reorganised. The new team approach to leading the curriculum has brought benefits in that there is now a consistent approach to subject development to ensure continuity if key leaders leave the school. It also provides professional development opportunities for newer staff, who are enthused by this chance to play a wider role within the school community. Consequently, staff work well together as a team and are highly motivated. The response to Ofsted's staff survey was highly positive, with most members of staff reporting that they are proud to be a member of this school.

The skilled team of governors, some of who work at senior levels in the education sector, bring additional strength and expertise to the leadership of the school. Governors visit the school regularly to see for themselves how well it runs on a daily basis. They provide a high level of challenge to school leaders, although occasionally they rely on what school leaders tell them and do not always seek the evidence to support these assertions. Governors' working practice helps them to ensure that they meet all statutory responsibilities, including those for safeguarding pupils.

You, your leaders and governors know that standards need to improve in writing and mathematics. You are acting to improve the quality of teaching and learning. The new headteacher, who will join the school in September, is working with you and your governors to create an improvement plan that will take the school forward in the next stage of its development. Advisers from the local authority have provided training and support to help to strengthen provision and this is showing early signs of success.

Safeguarding is effective.

Systems to keep pupils safe are thorough and are fit for purpose. There are three designated lead safeguarding officers, all of whom have had recent training. They provide regular training for other staff so that they all know exactly what to do should they have a concern that a pupil might be at risk from harm. The safeguarding officers ensure that records are precise and chronologically accurate. They are tenacious in following up any concerns with external professionals when required.

All required checks are completed to ensure that staff, governors and visitors are suitable to work with children. These checks are recorded clearly on the school's single central record. Governors check this record regularly. The school has worked closely with the educational welfare officer to secure improved rates of attendance. The most recent information shows that pupils' attendance has improved and that it is now broadly average. The number of pupils who are persistently absent has also reduced, reflecting the success of actions taken.

Pupils say that they feel safe in school and that most adults listen to them and take any concerns they may have seriously. Pupils have a good understanding of different forms of bullying, including those related to modern technology. They are fully aware of the potential danger of providing personal information when using mobile devices. However, a few pupils feel that not all staff deal effectively with bullying and that how it is dealt with can depend on who they speak to. Through the personal, social, health and economic (PSHE) education lessons, pupils learn how to keep themselves safe from external risks, including those presented on roads and railways. They know that some non-medicinal drugs can be harmful. The majority of parents and carers who responded to the online survey, Parent View, felt that their children are safe and well looked after in school. However, a significant minority of parents disagreed. During the inspection, there was no evidence found to suggest that pupils are not safe in school.

Inspection findings

- In addition to evaluating the effectiveness of the school's arrangements for keeping pupils safe, we also agreed to examine the following aspects of the school's work:
 - the effectiveness of actions taken by school leaders to improve pupils' outcomes in writing and mathematics, particularly at key stage 2
 - the extent to which teaching enables all pupils, including those who are the most able, to make progress in writing and mathematics
 - how well the curriculum supports pupils' learning and progress and the opportunities pupils have to use their literacy and numeracy skills when learning in other subjects.
- Owing to actions taken by school leaders, there is an improving picture, with a higher number of pupils reaching the expected standard at the end of both key stage 1 and key stage 2 in writing and mathematics. There has been a particular focus on disadvantaged pupils and, as a result, these pupils are catching up quickly with their classmates. There has also been a pleasing increase in the number of pupils reaching a greater depth in these subjects. However, their progress across the school has been uneven owing to the frequent staff changes. The school's own evaluation of pupils' academic performance is optimistic and does not always identify the specific weaknesses in writing and mathematics quickly enough. Consequently, some actions have been introduced slowly and have not yet had time to take effect. The quality of work presented in pupils' books is often untidy and leads to inaccuracies, particularly in spelling, handwriting and mathematics. This is something leaders are addressing but it is still too soon for this to demonstrate improvements.
- The leader for mathematics, who is also the deputy headteacher, is relatively new to his role. He has introduced a new programme for teaching mathematics and has provided training for staff to help them to change the way in which mathematics is taught. As a result, pupils are gaining a fluency in number so that they carry out calculations more accurately and rapidly. However, pupils are not

yet routinely expected to use these skills to solve written problems or to reason and explain their answers.

- There have been several recent changes to the leadership of English. It is currently being led by the assistant headteacher, who took on the role in January this year. She has used the expertise of local authority advisers to help to train staff and she has introduced more opportunities for pupils to write. A new programme for teaching phonics has been successful and this is reflected in improved outcomes in Year 1. However, work in pupils' books shows that they make slow progress in writing, particularly in key stage 1 and the lower part of key stage 2. They do not all learn to write, spell or punctuate their work as well as they should.
- The quality of teaching varies across the school. There are strengths in upper key stage 2, where teachers demonstrate good subject knowledge and engaging methods that stimulate pupils. For example, in a Year 5 mathematics lesson, the pupils prepared well for classroom activities by lining up in the playground to demonstrate practically the difference between positive and negative numbers. They then used this learning to add and subtract the negative and positive numbers effectively. There are good links to other curriculum subjects, including science and geography, for example, with references to thermometers and temperature.
- In some classes, teachers do not have high enough expectations of what pupils can do. Work in pupils' books shows that teachers do not routinely demand enough of pupils. Not all teachers apply the school's marking and feedback policy and, consequently, pupils are not clear about what they need to do to improve their work. There are times too when work does not build on what pupils already know and can do.
- The curriculum offered to pupils covers the national curriculum and offers pupils specialist tuition in French, music and physical education. It is well planned and supplemented by visits to local places of interest, including a local motor museum and the beach. There is an increasing focus on outdoor education, with the introduction of the forest school where pupils learn about the natural world and develop personal skills, including teamwork, resilience and cooperation. There are increasing opportunities for pupils to use their literacy and numeracy skills in other subjects. However, work in pupils' books shows that there is sometimes limited coverage and lack of depth to learning subjects such as history and geography. Too little attention is paid to how skills in these subjects will be developed and built upon as pupils move through the school. Consequently, pupils do not always progress as well as they could in subjects other than English and mathematics.

Next steps for the school

Leaders and those responsible for governance should ensure that:

- leadership at all levels is strengthened so that leaders and governors have an accurate view of the strengths and weaknesses of the school

- the quality of teaching, learning and assessment is consistently strong across the school and teachers have high expectations of what pupils can do across the curriculum.

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

Yours sincerely

Joy Considine
Ofsted Inspector

Information about the inspection

I observed teaching, learning and assessment in most classes with the deputy headteacher or the assistant headteacher, and I looked at work in pupils' English, mathematics and topic books. I met with the deputy headteacher and the assistant headteacher to discuss your own evaluation of the school's performance and the plans you have in place for further improvement. I met with three governors, including the chair of governors, and I reviewed minutes from their recent meetings. I also looked at information regarding pupils' learning and progress, as well as information showing how effectively the school keeps pupils safe. I spoke with a small group of pupils and took account of the 12 responses to the pupil survey. I took into account the 64 responses to the online survey, Parent View, as well as analysing 34 written responses. I considered the 35 responses to the staff survey.