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Mrs Margy Bushell  
Headteacher  
Parklands Infant School  
Havering Road  
Romford  
Essex  
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Dear Mrs Bushell

### **Short inspection of Parklands Infant School**

Following my visit to the school on 6 February 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 have set high expectations for what pupils can achieve. These expectations are based on your ethos: 'Children are our future'. You also seek to enable all pupils to develop an awareness of self and sensitivity to others, achieve the highest possible standards, appreciate their lives and achievements and those of others, and develop a love of learning, and you seek to provide skills for the next steps in pupils' learning. One of the strengths of the school is the pupils' attitudes to learning. They work hard to support each other. They are polite, resilient, increasingly independent and take a pride in their school.

You provide clear direction for the school's future improvement. The majority of parents and carers are very supportive of the school. They recognise your teachers are 'hard-working and committed' and there to support their children. You focus strongly on academic success as well as opportunities for pupils to participate in a broad range of learning activities.

You appreciate that you serve a community and have created a learning environment that promotes your core values. Your curriculum meets the needs of all pupils because you are constantly reviewing its effectiveness. You have established an effective senior leadership team. This team is determined to do the best for all the pupils in the school. Together, you have led the effective improvements in teaching. You have addressed the aspects for improvement that were identified in the previous inspection and improved the quality of phonics teaching and the rates at which pupils make progress. You have identified the appropriate priorities to

continue to improve the school.

Children in the early years make good progress given their starting points and capabilities. Leaders rightly identified that there are gaps in learning for certain groups by the end of Year 2 in reading, writing and mathematics – for example, disadvantaged pupils and boys. You put in place a full range of strategies to support pupils in the classroom and in additional sessions. This includes targeting pupils in number groups, developing learning plans for specific pupils and implementing your 'risky risk-takers' system, which encourages pupils to take responsibility for their own learning. Such strategies have been successful in improving progress for all pupils. The quality of teaching and learning continues to be a focus for the leadership team in its drive to ensure that classroom practice is consistently high quality. You agree that attendance is low and too many pupils are persistently absent.

Governors have a good understanding of the school. Their range of skills enable them to support school improvements well. Governors use a range of information effectively to challenge school leaders. They ensure that their regular visits to school enable them to see first-hand the work of school leaders. This is helping them become more directly involved in the strategic direction of the school.

### **Safeguarding is effective.**

Leaders and governors have ensured that all safeguarding arrangements are effective and records are complete. All checks on the suitability of staff to work at the school are in place. Staff and governor training is up to date and this has covered how to spot when pupils may be at risk of radicalisation or female genital mutilation. Staff and governors understand the current guidance. They take this responsibility seriously and are effective at all levels. A culture of vigilance has been established to keep pupils safe. Staff know how to raise any concerns they have about a pupil's welfare using the effective school system. Leaders work well with families and external agencies to ensure that pupils receive well-targeted support, as required. Your safeguarding team operates well to address any concerns about pupils' well-being.

Pupils know how to keep themselves safe, including when using online technology. Internet safety days help pupils understand how to manage risk online. Parents and pupils agree that the school is a safe place to learn.

### **Inspection findings**

- I looked at the actions leaders are taking to diminish the differences between disadvantaged pupils and others. This was because, in 2017, attainment in reading, writing and mathematics was low for these pupils by the end of Year 2. In 2016, attainment in the phonics screening check for the same pupils in Year 1 showed disadvantaged pupils to be above the national average. In 2017, their attainment in reading was below the national average at both the expected and higher standards. Consequently, although disadvantaged pupils do well in their

phonics screening check at the end of Year 1, their progress in reading is not sustained through the school. The school has recognised this and is ensuring that all pupils making good progress in their reading is a priority for leaders.

- On our visits to lessons, we saw that children in the Nursery Year are encouraged to practise their speaking skills and to talk in full sentences. They listen attentively to others and help each other in their role as 'learning detectives'. They are successful in identifying numbers from the resources provided. In the Reception Year, children enthusiastically engage in a full range of activities. Teachers know their children well and constantly interact with them to challenge their thinking. Early literacy skills are reinforced. For example, when having a snack, children are encouraged to write their names and place the paper in a post box. Parents are encouraged to support their learning through 'Stay, play and learn' sessions. In Year 1, all pupils are challenged to write a description of a forest. There is effective support for small groups and for individuals on a one-to-one basis. In Year 2, pupils use 'fact families' to reinforce their understanding of multiplication and division. Practical apparatus is used well to consolidate pupils' knowledge of their multiplication tables. Good use of questions challenges all pupils. This includes most-able mathematicians, some of whom are disadvantaged pupils. Year 2 pupils whom we heard read are making good progress. Their knowledge of phonics helps them read unfamiliar words. However, not all pupils understand what they have read.
- Additional strategies to support disadvantaged pupils inside and outside the classroom are effective. Personalised support is provided for identified pupils. This is helping all pupils, especially those whose first language is not English. The use of additional funding through the pupil premium has been used well. For example, a speech therapist has enabled a number of pupils improve their communication skills. A home-school support worker has engaged with many families, which has improved both pupils' attendance and progress. Evidence from observations, school assessments and work sampling show that disadvantaged pupils make good progress.
- For the second line of enquiry, we agreed to look at how the school's curriculum meets the needs of all pupils, especially boys. This was because from 2015 to 2017, the performance of boys was below that of girls either in the early years and/or Year 2. Leaders are aware of the need to focus on the progress of these pupils.
- The support provided for these pupils has been reviewed to ensure that it is effective. For example, the outdoor learning provision has been improved. There is a greater emphasis on practical activities, which engage all pupils but especially boys. Opportunities are provided both in classrooms and outside to inspire, arouse curiosity and encourage resilience. In the Reception Year, both boys and girls are engaged in planned activities. Boys identify letters on a keyboard, which encourages them to write. Throughout the school, pupils are encouraged to talk about their activities through challenging questions from teachers. This helps them to reflect on their learning and develop their understanding. Evidence from the most recent assessments shows that boys are making good progress.

- Finally, I looked at how leaders' actions have helped improve attendance and reduce the proportion of persistent absentees. This was because attendance was below the national average in 2017 and was low for specific groups from 2015 to 2017. Leaders acknowledge this. They have identified attendance as a priority. Leaders have high expectations and have ensured that strategies are in place for attendance to improve.
- There are displays to encourage good attendance. Each week, the class with the highest attendance is celebrated. The school regularly celebrates those pupils who have full attendance. Additional funding has been used well to improve attendance. This includes breakfast clubs, which target specific pupils. The use of the home-school support worker enables the school to support pupils who have low attendance. The work is supported by the education welfare officer. Consequently, there is a greater emphasis on working closely with parents, especially when their children first start school.
- The senior leadership team monitors attendance information and ensures that low attendance is followed up. The school analyses its attendance information alongside progress information. However, this analysis is insufficiently detailed to focus on specific groups, especially those pupils who are persistently absent. Although there have been some individual successes, attendance remains below the national average.

### **Next steps for the school**

Leaders and those responsible for governance should ensure that:

- overall attendance improves and persistent absence reduces for all pupils and especially key groups
- governors are more directly involved in the strategic direction of the school.

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

Yours sincerely

Richard Barnes  
**Ofsted Inspector**

### **Information about the inspection**

During the inspection, we carried out the following activities:

- met with the headteacher and senior leaders
- held meetings with members of the governing body
- met with the school's improvement partner
- listened to pupils read
- listened to the views of parents
- reviewed a range of documents, including the school's self-evaluation and improvement plans and information about pupils' progress and attendance
- scrutinised a range of pupils' work
- reviewed the school's single central record, pre-employment checks and safeguarding procedures
- scrutinised the school's website
- considered 148 responses to Ofsted's online questionnaire, Parent View
- considered 23 responses to the staff survey
- visited lessons in classes with members of the leadership team.