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Mrs Christina Ashford
Headteacher
Trimley St Mary Primary School
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Dear Mrs Ashford

Short inspection of Trimley St Mary Primary School

Following my visit to the school on 9 May 2019, 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 January 2016.

This school continues to be good.

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

You have made good progress in addressing areas of improvement from the previous inspection. Pupils feel that they are given helpful, specific advice by their teachers to help them to improve their work. There are also opportunities for pupils to develop their independence and resilience. For example, during the inspection, I observed a mathematics lesson in Year 6. It was a challenging activity in which pupils worked collaboratively to solve a problem about calculating the area of a shape with as little information provided as possible. This demonstrated their resilience and tenacity in solving difficult problems as well as applying their knowledge about the properties of shape, angles and calculating the area of a complex shape.

You and your leadership team have an accurate knowledge of the school's strengths and the areas that need improvement. Together, you and your leaders have taken effective action to ensure that the school continues to improve. Your accurate self-evaluation is building the school's capacity for further improvement.

There are some indications that more recent initiatives are also having a positive impact on pupils' progress and attainment, for example the school's approach to teaching mathematics. However, more work needs to be done to ensure that all children are challenged in mathematics, especially the most able.

In the early years, children do not have sufficient irresistible mathematics activities to choose to complete independently.

Staff are proud to work at the school. They are committed to helping pupils do well. Parents are extremely positive about every aspect of the school and words such as 'nurture', 'encourage' and 'thrive' sum up the sentiments expressed on Parent View. The overwhelming majority of parents would recommend the school to others.

Governors know the school well and visit regularly to ensure that their statutory duties are met and that you are addressing the school priorities effectively. They use their detailed knowledge to offer you and your leaders good support.

Safeguarding is effective.

Leaders and governors have ensured that arrangements for safeguarding are fit for purpose. Staff receive appropriate training so they understand how to keep pupils safe. You provide regular updates to keep staff informed. Records are well maintained and identify actions taken to address concerns. All of the appropriate pre-employment checks are carried out on staff and volunteers.

Pupils understand about keeping themselves safe and your staff teach pupils to keep themselves safe when online. Pupils understand what bullying is and explained that they were confident that if it happens it is resolved quickly and effectively by staff. Pupils said that they feel safe in school. They are confident that adults will do all that they can to ensure their welfare and well-being. Parents agree that their children are safe at school and well cared for.

Inspection findings

- To ascertain that the school remained good, my first key line of enquiry was to find out how leaders had secured and were ensuring sustained improvements in pupils' achievement in reading, writing and mathematics.
- I observed phonics teaching during the inspection and this was characterised by good subject knowledge, careful planning and lots of practice and repetition of essential sounds. The school has created three inviting libraries, including one outside, to promote a love of books and reading. Children are enthusiastic about books and many enjoy the weekly reading challenge. The outcomes for reading have improved significantly at the end of key stage 1 and key stage 2 since 2016.
- Teachers have ensured that pupils have a good understanding of grammar, punctuation and spelling. Pupils use this knowledge well in their writing. Pupils are provided with many opportunities to write for different purposes and in different styles to improve the content. Pupils have personalised targets for writing on their 'blue bookmarks'. They use these well and therefore have a good understanding of what to do next to improve their writing further. Evidence in pupils' books across the school shows that they make good progress in their writing skills. The standard of handwriting is also good throughout the school.

- Although results and progress in mathematics at key stage 2 have improved from being below the national average in 2016 to being broadly in line with the national average in 2018, you and the governors have identified improving progress in mathematics as a key part of the school's improvement plan. You embarked on a programme of staff training to improve the teaching and curriculum for mathematics. There is now a consistent approach from Year 1 to Year 6, resulting in a greater retention of knowledge and understanding by pupils. Pupils' books show that they calculate numbers very well and have a firm grasp of addition, subtraction, multiplication and division. They think through their work carefully and find correct answers to tricky calculations.
- Pupils are now making good progress because of improved teaching and learning. However, there is not enough challenge for the most able pupils or use of reasoning skills in mathematics lessons.
- I also sought to establish the breadth and richness of the curriculum and to find how leaders ensure that all pupils develop appropriate knowledge and skills to make good progress through the wider curriculum.
- The school offers a broad curriculum, teaching all the required subjects, and leaders have given careful consideration to its content and organisation. Pupils are encouraged to approach their work 'as a scientist', 'as a historian' or 'as an artist', but the curriculum has not always been planned or sequenced in a way that cumulatively builds essential subject knowledge and skills. You have recently started work to identify the knowledge and skills to be taught in each year group to ensure that pupils make good progress in all subjects.
- Other lines of enquiry centred on attendance and behaviour in school. In 2017/18, the rate of attendance was below the national average compared with similar schools. The rate of persistent absence was also worse than the national average. You shared information about the attendance of individual pupils. This showed that the relatively high persistent absence rates were due to the absence of a small number of pupils.
- You have robust procedures to follow up absence and to encourage all pupils to attend regularly. Good attendance is recognised in celebration assemblies and rewarded. The school monitors the attendance of all pupils closely and makes timely contact if attendance continues to slip. Because of actions taken, current attendance overall has improved and is in line with the national average. Leaders continue to work hard to communicate the link between attendance and achievement in school to pupils, parents and carers.
- The rate of fixed-term exclusions has reduced significantly since 2016/17. During the inspection I noted that in class pupils are settled, learn well and respond readily to adult direction. School records show marked improvements in the quality of behaviour of pupils highlighted as struggling with their social, emotional and mental health needs. This is as a result of the support and intervention provided. Every pupil I spoke with told me that pupils are well behaved at the school. The majority of parents who responded to Parent View also agreed that the school makes sure that its pupils are well behaved.

Next steps for the school

Leaders and those responsible for governance should ensure that:

- the strategies to improve mathematics are embedded and there remains a continued focus on providing challenge for the most able as well as developing pupils' reasoning skills
- teachers develop the curriculum by planning lessons in subjects other than English and mathematics that develop specific knowledge and skills and provide appropriate challenge for all groups of pupils.

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

Yours sincerely

Ashley Best-White
Ofsted Inspector

Information about the inspection

I held meetings with you and other senior leaders and a group of four governors. I spoke to groups of pupils and individual pupils around the school. We made visits to lessons to observe pupils' learning and I looked at pupils' books across a range of ages, abilities and subjects. I scrutinised a range of documentary evidence, which included the school's self-evaluation, the school improvement plan, current progress information and pupils' attendance information. Policies and procedures for the safeguarding of pupils were examined, along with the school's record of checks carried out on staff working at the school. I evaluated safeguarding referrals and child protection records, including the single central record. I also looked at the school's website. In addition, I took account of the 43 responses to Parent View, Ofsted's online questionnaire, 14 free-text responses, the 23 responses to the staff questionnaire and 15 responses to the pupil questionnaire.