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Deborah Smith
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Dear Mrs Smith

Short inspection of Pratts Bottom Primary School

Following my visit to the school on 12 January 2016, 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 February 2011.

This school continues to be good.

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

You joined the school in September 2015 and have wasted no time in gaining an accurate understanding of the school's performance. Your clear vision and determination have already had a positive impact. You have taken steps to strengthen the leadership of teaching. Expectations of those who lead the development of subjects have been raised. You have provided them with the training and time necessary to carry out their roles effectively. They now observe teachers' practice in the classroom in addition to evaluating the quality of pupils' work in their workbooks and scrutinising teachers' planning. Given the importance you place on inclusion, you have, rightly, expanded the senior leadership team to include the special needs coordinator (SENCO). You and the governors are keen to ensure that the caring and nurturing aspects of the school are maintained but that the school does not become isolated. Plans for the school to convert to academy status and for it to join a multi-academy trust are well advanced. The planned date for conversion is 1 April 2016. The work you and your team do in collaboration with colleagues from other schools ensures that you access a wide range of expertise. This has helped to raise the quality of teaching, learning and assessment.

The governing body is well aware of its statutory duties. Meetings are structured to address key issues relating to their vision, accountability, oversight of financial matters and safeguarding. Governors are well prepared for meetings, having received relevant papers in advance. They are well informed about the school's relative strengths and weaknesses. The information they receive from the headteacher enables them to keep a close eye on pupils' progress. Governors ensure that they undertake training relevant to their roles. Training courses attended both at and beyond the school cover a wide range of topics. The range of expertise held by individual governors, including educational and financial, is put to good use in challenging and supporting the school.

The report written following the school's previous inspection referred to the need to ensure that pupils have as many opportunities to develop their writing as possible. It is clear from looking in pupils' workbooks, and from speaking to staff and pupils, that the development of writing has received considerable attention. You continue to address writing as an area for development because you know there is more to do. For example, you have identified that some pupils do not gain a thorough understanding of phonics quickly enough. This is important as it contributes to pupils having a firm foundation on which to build their reading and writing skills. Another area for development was to extend pupils' understanding of different cultures and customs. Since the last inspection, the subject of fundamental British values has become more prominent nationally. So too has the focus on pupils being encouraged to show tolerance and respect to those of different faiths, races and cultures. This issue has been addressed well. Pupils are keen to share their views and opinions. Older pupils were able to explain clearly that it is perfectly acceptable for others to hold different beliefs from their own. Pupils appreciate that having an understanding of the cultures and customs of others helps to avoid causing offence and that it promotes mutual respect.

Safeguarding is effective.

Procedures for reporting concerns relating to safeguarding are understood and followed by staff. You keep clear records of the actions you take to address concerns, including the communications you have with other agencies. Governors are clear about their role in raising awareness of the 'Prevent' strategy. Despite the low number of pupils on roll and there being a close-knit local community, governors understand the importance of protecting pupils from radicalisation. Responses to the online pupil questionnaire and discussions with pupils during the inspection show that they have a good understanding of the need to respect people from other backgrounds. Parents spoken to during the inspection and those who responded to the online questionnaire unanimously agreed that their children felt safe at school.

Inspection findings

- Published attainment data for pupils completing Key Stage 1 in 2015 showed a decline from the previous year in reading, writing and mathematics. As a consequence of there being low numbers of pupils in each cohort, individual pupils represent a high proportion in published statistics. Last year's Year 2 and Year 6 classes both had significantly higher than average proportions of pupils with special educational needs. Although these pupils did not reach the same levels of attainment as their peers, many of them made more than expected progress. This

is due to teachers' understanding of pupils' individual needs, their expectations of what can be achieved, and the tailored support they provide.

- The SENCO has recently completed the nationally accredited qualification for special educational needs coordination. As a result, the school's approach to identifying and supporting pupils' additional needs is in line with current expectations. You make effective use of visiting professionals' expertise; they provide training for staff as well as working directly with individual pupils. You keep a close eye on the progress pupils make as a result of the small-group and individual support they receive. Parents, teachers and support staff are regularly involved in reviewing pupils' achievements. This means that you respond quickly to pupils' changing needs.
- The proportion of children leaving the Reception class having reached a good level of development was low in 2013 and 2014. However, this rose significantly in 2015 and was in line with the national average. Opportunities for child-initiated and teacher-led activities are well balanced. The environment both inside and outside is stimulating and well organised. Children are thoroughly engaged in their activities, concentrating well on their chosen or directed task. The positive atmosphere supports the development of children's confidence effectively. During the inspection, children used the role play area, set up as a police station, applying their phonics and writing skills to list the names of newly admitted 'baddies'. Adults engage children in conversation, questioning and challenging them to think for themselves and to explore concepts in greater depth. For example, noticing that a child had chosen to place plastic bobbins of alternating colours on a wooden dowel, an adult capitalised on the opportunity to discuss the concept of pattern. Children get off to a good start in the Reception class.
- The proportion of pupils with high levels of absence increased in 2015, having been in line with, or below, national figures previously. School records suggest that this is related to a minority of parents taking family holidays during term time. While school documentation dissuades parents from booking holidays during term time, the approach is not sufficiently robust or effective.
- The school is working in collaboration with 11 others in a two-year project focusing on pupils' writing. It aims to increase the consistency of the school's approach to the teaching and assessment of writing, as well as to inspire pupils to see themselves as authors. This work has already had an impact on the way teachers plan the process of writing. They adopt a consistent and detailed approach. Pupils, including the youngest, enjoy their writing and understand the approach you and the teachers are taking to help them become more accomplished and confident writers. Teachers plan stimulating activities to capture pupils' imagination and attention. On the day of the inspection, Year 3 and 4 pupils had been invited to bring their pets to school. The experience was used to generate enthusiasm for writing, while pupils learned specifically about the grammar associated with direct speech. During our visit to the Year 5 and 6 class, pupils edited their writing about the Second World War, exhibiting positive attitudes, determination and focus. One child adeptly replaced the word 'people' with 'innocent, hardworking Londoners' in his text relating to the Blitz, adding greater meaning and emotion to his writing. You understand the importance of phonics in establishing a firm foundation for

pupils' writing skills and have correctly identified that some pupils do not become familiar with phonics quickly enough. Therefore, you have planned additional training for teachers so that their teaching of phonics is better tailored to pupils' differing needs.

Next steps for the school

Leaders and those responsible for governance should ensure that:

- pupils develop a secure understanding of phonics, establishing a firm foundation on which to build further writing skills
- robust measures are taken to address persistent absence, in particular that relating to holidays taken during term time.

I am copying this letter to the Chair of the Governing Body, the Regional Schools Commissioner and the Director of Children's Services for London Borough of Bromley. This letter will be published on the Ofsted website.

Yours sincerely

Jeremy Loukes
Her Majesty's Inspector

Information about the inspection

During the inspection we made short visits to each classroom. I met with you, senior leaders and the leaders of English, mathematics and the Early Years Foundation Stage. I held a telephone conversation with a representative of the local authority. I met with parents at the start of the school day and considered the 18 responses to Parent View, Ofsted's online questionnaire. Of these, 14 included written comments. In addition to meeting with a group of older pupils and speaking to others during visits to lessons, I considered 30 responses to the online pupil questionnaire. I scrutinised a range of documentation relating to safeguarding, and reviewed the school's development plans.