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Mr Matthew Hanks
Headteacher
Roger Ascham Primary School
Wigton Road
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Dear Mr Hanks

Short inspection of Roger Ascham Primary School

Following my visit to the school on 27 February 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 November 2014.

This school continues to be good.

The leadership team has maintained the good quality of education in the school since the last inspection. You, together with leaders and governors, have an accurate understanding of the school's strengths and areas for improvement. Areas identified for improvement from the previous inspection have been addressed effectively. The school has a strong, committed and ambitious leadership team which focuses on high expectations and improving outcomes for pupils. Leaders have detailed plans that outline their next steps. You have established a strong sense of teamwork, and staff are supportive of you and each other. All staff who responded to the online survey agreed that they are proud to work at the school.

Pupils are polite and welcoming. They work well together and move around the school sensibly. They told me that they feel safe in the school. In recent surveys, parents and carers expressed confidence that the school deals with any bullying, should it arise. Teachers ensure that pupils persevere with tasks and remain focused on their activities. Teachers encourage pupils to support each other and to be confident when contributing to class discussions. You have successfully engaged parents in the work of the school. For example, teachers invite parents into the school to work alongside their children during reading activities. All of the parents who responded to Ofsted's online survey Parent View confirmed that they would recommend the school to other parents.

The school environment is impressive. The school is tidy and well organised, and the displays around the school are good quality. Displays give a clear picture of the increasingly rich variety of experiences that your pupils enjoy, and from which they learn.

Governance is strong. Governors know the school well and are clear about the challenges it faces as well as its priorities for the future, and how to achieve them. While being supportive, governors are also robust in holding you and other leaders to account for the school's performance. They use a range of evidence to do this.

Safeguarding is effective.

There is a strong culture of safeguarding in the school, supported by regular training and updates on child protection. Leaders and governors ensure that safeguarding arrangements are effective. Records are suitably detailed and well maintained. The two trained safeguarding leads work well together to ensure that pupils are kept safe. Staff know how to raise any concerns they have about a pupil's welfare, using the school's comprehensive reporting system. Leaders work well with families and external agencies so that pupils receive well-targeted support if required.

Pupils feel safe in the school. Parents and staff agree that the school gives pupils' safety high priority. Pupils feel confident talking to their teachers if they have concerns. The curriculum provides many opportunities for pupils to learn how to keep themselves safe in a range of situations. Pupils say that bullying is rare and that, when it happens, staff deal with it quickly and well.

Inspection findings

- We agreed firstly to focus on pupils' progress in reading at key stage 1. The previous inspection identified that phonics was not being taught consistently well. Leaders have taken swift and effective action to address these inconsistencies. All staff have high expectations of what pupils are capable of achieving in phonics.
- Pupils are taught phonics in their year groups across Nursery, Reception, Year 1 and Year 2, and the same teachers deliver all sessions. This enables teachers to judge more effectively when pupils are ready to be moved on to the next phase of their learning. Staff have good subject knowledge and say sounds clearly and appropriately. As a result, pupils make good progress. Teachers and other adults use technology and other stimulating resources effectively to motivate and engage pupils in activities, so that they learn better.
- In Reception, children are able to sound out single sounds and the sounds made by groups of letters confidently, drawing upon their prior learning. In Year 2, there was evidence of pupils using their knowledge of phonics independently to read and write more effectively. As a result of improvements in the teaching of phonics and reading, in 2018, 87% of Year 1 pupils met the expected standard in the screening check, compared to 83% nationally. By the end of key stage 1, 40% of pupils achieved greater depth in reading.
- Leaders identify pupils in need of support more effectively than at the time of the last inspection. Leaders use information on pupils' progress to plan effective strategies to help them catch up. This has had a significant impact on pupils' progress in reading. Outcomes have improved rapidly in some year groups.

- Teachers use new resources and reading books effectively. As a result, pupils are eager to read and take pride in the number of books they have read. Pupils are knowledgeable about books and authors and express their opinions clearly. Teachers and other adults help children tackle challenging sections of books. Pupils use skills such as inference and prediction.
- Next, we agreed to investigate how middle leaders support teachers to help pupils make greater progress in all subjects. Curriculum overviews on the school website do not give a clear enough picture of all the subjects being taught. Recently, leaders have carefully reviewed the content of the curriculum.
- Work in pupils' books and on display increasingly demonstrates the high expectations that staff have of pupils. Teachers plan a wider range of imaginative and interesting activities than at the time of the previous inspection. Teachers set homework which enhances the quality of work being produced. Teachers provide a wider range and variety of extra-curricular activities, which pupils appreciate.
- As a result of focused training and support, middle leaders are planning the curriculum more effectively to extend and deepen pupils' knowledge and skills. Middle leaders are also providing greater challenge and support to colleagues when planning activities.
- The final area we focused on was how effectively leaders' actions have improved pupils' attendance and reduced the proportion of pupils who are persistently absent. This was because the number of pupils who are persistently absent has remained above the national averages in recent years.
- Leaders have high expectations for attendance and have introduced new strategies to reduce current levels of absence. All staff now analyse attendance data, and leaders have targeted resources to improve the attendance of pupils. Together with current staff, a recently appointed welfare officer emphasises to parents the importance of regular school attendance. Leaders motivate pupils to attend school by rewarding pupils who attend regularly. Leaders also challenge parents when attendance is a concern. It is too early to evaluate the full impact of these strategies, and attendance remains a priority for leaders.

Next steps for the school

Leaders and those responsible for governance should ensure that:

- middle leaders contribute to the implementation of a curriculum that fully meets the needs of pupils, so that pupils gain knowledge and skills in a range of subjects
- leaders continue to take effective action to improve attendance, particularly for pupils who are persistently absent.

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

Yours sincerely

Christopher Birtles
Ofsted Inspector

Information about the inspection

During the inspection, I met with you, the deputy headteacher, the school challenge partner and other middle leaders. I also met three members of the governing body, including the chair of governors. I considered 26 responses from parents to Ofsted's online survey Parent View, 27 responses from staff and responses from children to a survey. I visited classes in Reception, key stage 1 and key stage 2. I observed pupils' behaviour in lessons and looked at samples of pupils' work.

I viewed a range of documents, including leaders' evaluations of the school's current performance and the plans for further improvement. I considered attendance information and a number of policy documents, including those for safeguarding. I examined the school's website to check that it meets requirements on the publication of specified information.