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Ms Maxine Osbaldeston
Headteacher
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Dear Ms Osbaldeston

Short inspection of Launcelot Primary School

Following my visit to the school on 12 January 2017, 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 May 2012.

This school continues to be good.

The leadership team has maintained the good quality of education in the school since the last inspection. Since your appointment as headteacher in 2015, you have restored coherence and confidence to the school community following a period of great turbulence in staffing and leadership.

There has been a large number of staff changes since the previous inspection, including at senior level. You have strengthened senior leadership in a short time, identifying talent within the school and recruiting skilful new senior leaders. Middle leaders make an effective contribution to school improvement and can explain the impact of their work. You recognise that further development of the skills of middle leaders is necessary to ensure that leadership is strong enough to sustain the good quality of education provided.

You have ensured that areas for improvement identified at the last inspection have been tackled well since your arrival. For example, pupils now receive guidance which they can understand, have time to respond to and which contributes well to their progress. As a result, standards have recovered after a dip.

Pupils in the current school year are making good progress. You have ensured that standards in reading are improving rapidly after a decline since the last inspection. However, you recognise that leaders must continue to challenge and support teachers in their work to help pupils deepen their understanding of the books they read. You know that many pupils lack the experiences or breadth of vocabulary to make sense of more challenging texts without the expert guidance of teachers.

You have worked hard, ably supported by governors, to sustain good communications with parents and build trust. Pupils have noticed the improvements you have brought about since your appointment. They say that they enjoy the more challenging work and feel proud to be part of the school.

Safeguarding is effective.

You carry out thorough checks on the suitability of staff. Governors routinely make sure that the records of these meet requirements. You ensure that all safeguarding arrangements are fit for purpose and records are detailed and of high quality. Senior leaders ensure that all those working in the school are kept up to date with the most recent safeguarding guidance and receive appropriate training. You insist that members of staff take time to understand how pupils' circumstances may affect the nature and extent of risks to their well-being.

Members of staff know how to raise concerns. These are dealt with promptly. Decisions to refer concerns to the appropriate authority are made skilfully and appropriately. The work you have done to encourage parents to talk with leaders enables you to identify risks at an early stage. Pupils understand how and why they need to learn how to stay safe. They say that they feel well prepared for managing risks in and out of school, including when they use the internet.

Inspection findings

- We agreed that the progress of current pupils in reading should be a key line of enquiry. The proportion of pupils attaining the expected standard in the Year 1 phonics check had been declining. Rates of progress of pupils in reading through key stage 2 were below national averages in 2016.
- Your own information and the work I sampled during inspection demonstrates that current pupils are making good progress in reading. Disadvantaged pupils are provided with timely additional support if they fall behind in learning. This support is closely and regularly monitored. It is swiftly adapted if it is not leading to improvements and extended if it proves successful. Your information shows that disadvantaged pupils are making similar or better progress to other pupils in many classes as a result of this effective use of additional funding.

- You have ensured that teachers have become more skilled in helping pupils acquire phonics skills. The pupils I heard read from Year 2 were enjoying reading from books which included unfamiliar words that they were able to tackle using the skills teachers have helped them learn. The most able older readers I spoke with are selective about the books they read and can explain their reading preferences eloquently. You are ensuring that additional funding is being used effectively to challenge the most able disadvantaged pupils to make better progress in the current school year.
- During our visits to classrooms, we decided to focus on the impact of teachers' work to help pupils understand their next steps in learning in writing and mathematics. This was an area for improvement at the last inspection.
- Pupils' extended writing and their written work in mathematics demonstrate that current pupils receive consistently effective guidance. Teachers expect pupils to use advice to improve subsequent writing. The positive impact of this is clear in pupils' work. In mathematics, pupils are given clear guidance to help them apply their skills. The most able pupils are expected to explain the reasons for the answers they arrive at, and to describe patterns and relationships in outcomes of their investigations.
- You have rightly decided to make the further development of middle leaders' skills a priority. You and governors recognise the need to build capacity to sustain the improvements you have made since your appointment. I spoke to a number of middle leaders during the inspection. All of them could explain their impact on priorities for improvement in their areas of responsibility. They supported their views with evidence which convinced me that they know about outcomes for pupils in depth. This included leaders who have recently been appointed to their roles.
- Although attendance has been improving, rates were below national averages in 2016 and some groups of pupils, including disadvantaged pupils, were attending less well than others.
- Current rates of attendance are now in line with national averages. You have reduced persistent absence so that it is now also in line with that of other primary schools nationally. Differences between the attendance of disadvantaged pupils and others continue to diminish. Staff's work in nurturing effective relationships with parents and pupils has been crucial in securing these improvements. You have supported staff well in backing up their work by robustly challenging parents about their child's attendance when this has been necessary.

Next steps for the school

Leaders and those responsible for governance should ensure that:

- teachers help pupils of all abilities deepen their knowledge and understanding of the books they read so that they continue to make good progress

- priority continues to be given to further develop the skills of middle leaders in sustaining the good quality of education provided by the school.

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

Yours sincerely

Andrew Wright
Her Majesty's Inspector

Information about the inspection

Following discussions with school leaders, we agreed on the following lines of enquiry during the inspection:

- the effectiveness of the teaching of reading across the school, including for disadvantaged pupils
- the impact of senior and middle leaders in ensuring that teachers have the necessary skills and knowledge to ensure that pupils make good progress in reading, writing and mathematics
- the level of consistency with which teachers provide effective guidance to support pupils' progress in writing and mathematics
- how effectively leaders are improving attendance, particularly for vulnerable groups
- the coherence of the work of the school in applying the safeguarding policy and ensuring that those responsible have a good understanding of current guidance and local issues.

I held discussions with senior and middle leaders about priorities for improvement and the impact of their work. I spoke to representatives of the governing body and had a telephone conversation with an officer from the local authority. I visited classes with senior leaders, looking at pupils' work. I heard some pupils of different abilities read. I scrutinised documents related to safeguarding and school improvement. Responses to Parent View, Ofsted's online survey, were taken into account, together with the school's own survey of parents' views.