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Dr Nicholas Rudman
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Dear Dr Rudman

Short inspection of Maylandsea Primary School

Following my visit to the school on 10 July 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 your predecessor school was judged to be good in May 2013.

This school continues to be good.

The leadership team has maintained the good quality of education in the school since the last inspection. Based on the evidence gathered during this short inspection, I am of the opinion that the school has demonstrated strong practice and marked improvement in specific areas. This may indicate that the school has improved significantly overall. Therefore, I am recommending that the school's next inspection be a section 5 inspection.

Your school is welcoming and inclusive, your pupils feel valued and are rightly proud of their school. You and your senior leaders ensure that the learning environment is vibrant and celebratory. Pupils access a rich and broad curriculum, where they experience many engaging activities that deepen their understanding of the world around them. Pupils' behaviour is exemplary, they are respectful and friendly towards each other and to the adults who work with them. They listen carefully in their lessons and try hard to do their best. Pupils are confident and articulate. They talk positively about their time in school and the activities that they enjoy most. Your polite, kind and happy pupils are a credit to the school and community.

Parents are very positive about the school. They praise the curriculum and the skills of the school's staff, who they recognise as approachable, friendly and responsive to concerns. Parents feel very included and particularly value the events that you organise for them, such as the phonics training and class assemblies. The overwhelming majority of parents and pupils would recommend the school to others.

You and your team are uncompromising in your drive to raise standards across the school. You have created a culture of high expectation among the staff. Teachers readily accept responsibility for continuing to evaluate and improve the quality of provision for your pupils. Subject leaders provide high-quality leadership that holds staff accountable and produces a rich and stimulating curriculum.

The school's work on assessment is developing and your assessment information is increasingly accurate. However, you and senior leaders do not yet have formal systems in place that monitor the consistency and accuracy of judgements between year groups. As a consequence, staff do not share the same understanding of what constitutes greater depth or higher level working and are, at times, overly cautious when assessing pupils' work.

Since converting to academy status, the composition of your governing body has been reviewed. You have skilled and highly effective governors who have a clear understanding of the aims of the academy trust and the development needs of your school. Governors closely monitor curriculum development work. They have played a key role in ensuring continued school improvement. They regularly survey parents' views and implement improvements in response, for example setting up a homework club. They have supported your restructuring of support staff to ensure better provision for pupils who have special educational needs (SEN) and/or disabilities. This has contributed significantly to the progress that these pupils make.

Safeguarding is effective.

You and your team have made sure that all of the school's staff understand their responsibilities regarding safeguarding. They are vigilant and proactive. You always follow up concerns and maintain detailed records. Governors regularly check safeguarding records and procedures.

You have ensured an effective system for checking the backgrounds of all adults who join the school to ensure that they are safe to work with pupils, and this includes volunteers and building contractors.

Your pupils feel safe in school and believe that the adults take good care of them. The premises are maintained as a secure environment and pupils are appropriately supervised at all times. Parents and pupils say that bullying is very rare and that teachers always respond rapidly and sensitively to problems when they arise. Pupils have a good understanding of issues such as online safety and the importance of mutual respect.

Inspection findings

- I explored a number of lines of enquiry in this inspection. The first of these was to do with how you are bringing about improvements to the progress that your pupils make in reading and mathematics. Published key stage 2 data indicated a decline in progress in 2017. I wanted to see if this was generally the case throughout the school.

- Strong leadership in mathematics has played an important role in improvements in this subject. Training and preparation for the introduction of a new approach to the subject's teaching has been thorough. Staff have now adopted an approach that puts reasoning and resilience at the heart of mathematics teaching. Pupils enjoy their mathematics lessons and they cite the level of challenge as an important factor in this. They are becoming increasingly eager to tackle new ideas. In pupils' work books, there are many examples of rapid progress being made, with the older children demonstrating excellent reasoning and calculation skills.
- All the pupils I asked told me that they enjoy reading, that they have every opportunity to read at school and are encouraged to read a lot at home. You have worked with your English subject leaders to change the focus of how reading is taught. Pupils have found this to be extremely engaging. There is very strong evidence of pupils reading a wide range of texts for enjoyment and information. The pupils I read with were able to discuss their reading with confidence and demonstrated a good understanding of their books. In a Year 6 reading lesson, pupils were discussing the significance of vocabulary and ranking words for effect and relevance. This was highly effective in helping them to learn.
- I also looked at the school's provision for pupils who have SEN and/or disabilities. Parents praise the support that their children receive. The special educational needs coordinator (SENCo) manages her team of support assistants effectively. They are well trained and provide excellent learning support. Pupils who have SEN and/or disabilities make very good progress. This is because your SENCo has provided extremely strong leadership and has ensured consistent practice across the school. The consistency in practice is particularly notable in her work to increase pupils' independence in learning. A key aspect of this work has been in improving the way information is shared throughout the school and, consequently, staff and parents are fully engaged with new initiatives.
- I wanted to check on your school's rapid improvement in phonics since 2015. I observed teaching, spoke to your subject leader and read with Year 1 pupils. The teaching of phonics in key stage 1 and in the early years is a real strength. Teachers' subject knowledge is strong and pupils are very well supported in their lessons. Their individual progress in phonics is regularly and rigorously checked so that teachers can be sure that work is at the right level. The result of this is that pupils are continuing to make excellent progress. I listened to some Year 1 pupils read. They had all developed a good sight vocabulary and were confidently using phonics strategies to help them work out how to say unfamiliar words.
- Lastly, I wanted to find out about provision for your most able pupils. You have given a lot of thought to your curriculum's design to make sure that it is engaging for all and that teachers' expectations are high. Your aim is that teachers move pupils on rapidly with their learning so that they can achieve more in lesson time. This way of working is a feature throughout the school and teachers structure work in a range of challenges appropriate to pupils' needs. Pupils say that they are given 'good guidance' and enjoy the freedom of choice that they get with their learning. During the inspection, I was able to see many children selecting the most difficult challenges and making excellent progress.
- You have able and articulate pupils in your school who are making very strong

gains in their learning. Your formal assessments had not always captured this progress and so there were inconsistencies in the quality of information passed on from one year group to the next. Consequently, the most able pupils have not always been appropriately stretched in their learning. You are aware of this and work is being done to establish a more consistent monitoring system.

Next steps for the school

Leaders and those responsible for governance should ensure that:

- they continue to refine their monitoring systems so that teachers develop a shared understanding of, and consistency in, their assessments of pupils' work.

I am copying this letter to the chair of the governing body and the chief executive officer the multi-academy trust, the regional schools commissioner and the director of children's services for Essex. This letter will be published on the Ofsted website.

Yours sincerely

James Richards
Ofsted Inspector

Information about the inspection

My inspection activities included meetings with curriculum subject leaders, members of staff with responsibility for safeguarding and a number of governors. I also spoke with the multi-academy trust's chief executive officer. I carried out learning walks with senior leaders in all areas of the school, briefly visiting most classes. I looked in depth at pupils' mathematics books and listened to readers from Years 1 and 3.

During the inspection, I was able to refer to a range of the school's documents. These included leaders' evaluation of the school, and documentation relating to assessment, SEN, behaviour, attendance and safeguarding. I spoke with parents in the playground and held a meeting with a group of pupils. Seventy-one responses to Ofsted's online questionnaire, Parent View, were considered, as well as 22 responses to Ofsted's staff questionnaire and 11 responses to Ofsted's pupil questionnaire.