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Mrs Emma Vincent  
Headteacher  
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Dear Mrs Vincent

### **Short inspection of R A Butler Infant School**

Following my visit to the school on 7 March 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 April 2015.

### **This school continues to be good.**

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

You and your senior leaders have a clear and ambitious vision of what you want to achieve in the school, what to improve next and how to accomplish it. Leaders' actions have led to rapid and necessary improvements in reading, writing and mathematics, where standards are now consistently high. The Saffron Academy Trust offers a wealth of support, such as training and coaching for teachers, which has strengthened the school's leadership still further.

Leaders have created a strong ethos in which pupils learn to live the '6Rs', the values which lie at the heart of the school's work. All the pupils I spoke to were keen to tell me how they exemplify the '6Rs', such as how they grow 'successful relationships' through listening respectfully to each other. The comments in Parent View, Ofsted's online questionnaire, show that parents and carers fully support the school's chosen approach. One parent, summarising the views of many, said: 'The 6Rs are a great way to recognise great behaviour and we have even used these at home.' Parents value the opportunities to be as involved as much as possible in their children's learning and school life and all believe that the school is well led and managed. In particular, they value the 'fantastic learning experiences' offered to pupils, the staff who 'go above and beyond' and the headteacher who 'doesn't miss a beat and appears up-to-speed on all matters'.

Senior leaders listen carefully to staff and encourage them to follow their professional interests, such as through taking part in research which helps them to improve their teaching. Leaders ensure that staff take part in regular well-organised staff training so that they are well equipped to bring about improvements in their chosen areas. For example, a rigorous programme of training in the teaching of writing has led to pupils making strong progress in this subject from their starting points. All those staff who responded to Ofsted's questionnaire said that they are proud to work at the school and agree that leaders support them well in their work.

Senior leaders are committed to working with a range of partners in order to broaden expertise within the school. For example, they welcome the many opportunities offered by the trust such as visits by pupils to Saffron Hall to take part in music and dance workshops. Leaders actively seek to learn from best practice, and are keen to take part in external projects such as the 'What Works Well' project run by the London Institute of Education through the Saffron Alliance. Leaders regularly share good practice with the cluster of local schools, such as acting as the lead school in a project to raise achievement in mathematics.

Governors are well organised and take their roles seriously. They see the effect of leaders' actions at first hand through regular visits to the school and are not afraid to hold them to account. They have a good understanding of what the school's strengths are and what must improve next. They are properly informed and appreciate the honest flow of information from leaders in helping them to carry out their roles effectively.

At the time of the previous inspection, leaders and governors were asked to ensure that learning activities are at the right level of difficulty for pupils so that they can make good progress. Pupils' books show that learning activities are matched well to their needs in English and mathematics. Feedback from teachers focuses on the right things and helps pupils to make good progress.

Another area for improvement was to raise achievement in mathematics by ensuring that pupils can explain their thinking and better choose which methods to use when making calculations. Leaders and governors have brought about strong improvements in this area. Published assessment information for the school shows that pupils have achieved standards which have been typically above the national averages for the last three years. When I visited lessons, I saw evidence in pupils' books that they are making strong progress. This is because teachers routinely plan purposeful learning activities designed to bring about secure mathematical understanding. For example, in one lesson, I observed that pupils were successfully learning to subtract numbers by comparing the lengths of rods they had made with cubes.

Senior leaders have recently begun to develop the role of subject leaders in order to better monitor the quality of teaching and improve pupils' achievements in subjects other than English and mathematics. While subject leaders are eager to develop their roles and have made a good start, their leadership has not yet had time to show enough improvements to pupils' learning across a range of subjects.

## **Safeguarding is effective.**

Leaders have ensured that safeguarding arrangements are fit for purpose. Checks on all employees' suitability to work with children have been completed according to statutory requirements. Leaders provide effective training for all staff and ensure that they are constantly up to date. All staff are well aware of their responsibility to safeguard pupils and know what to do if they have a concern. Safeguarding records are well organised and show that leaders are tenacious in following up concerns about pupils' safety.

Pupils' well-being is of paramount importance to staff. Pupils who I spoke with said that they feel safe at school and trust staff to look after them. All parents and staff who completed Ofsted's online questionnaire agree that pupils are safe. Leaders work closely with external agencies to improve the lives of pupils, and know which agencies to turn to when help is needed. Pupils are taught well how to look after themselves, such as how to keep themselves safe online.

## **Inspection findings**

- In order to check whether the school remains good, I followed a number of lines of enquiry. I first focused on how effective leaders' actions are to ensure that pupils make the same strong progress across a range of different subjects as they do in English and mathematics.
- Pupils benefit from a rich curriculum which routinely includes interesting trips, themed weeks and special days. For example, displays following a recent visit to a local wildlife centre demonstrated pupils' wonder and delight as they handled birds and reptiles. On the day of the inspection, pupils had used their imagination to dress up as an adjective to celebrate World Book Day, coming up with costumes to exemplify adjectives such as 'sporty' and 'extinct'. Teachers plan effective links between writing and other subjects so that writing activities are purposeful. They are committed to setting up memorable learning activities which arouse pupils' curiosity. For example, Year 1 pupils were keen to tell me about the dinosaur egg which 'hatched' in the school hall, and which linked to their writing.
- While the wider curriculum fires pupils' imagination and motivates them to learn, teachers do not yet have sufficiently deep subject knowledge to routinely teach the specific skills and knowledge required within each subject. Sometimes, pupils' work in subjects other than English and mathematics is not purposeful enough and does not lead to sustained progress. This is because the school's approach towards the planning of subjects around a common theme, such as 'Location, Location', is not yet well organised enough to ensure that subjects are consistently taught in sufficient depth.
- Leaders are in the process of putting in place plans for improvement in this area. They have begun to take action to address gaps in the wider curriculum, such as well-designed staff training to improve subject knowledge which has already resulted in some improvements in the teaching of science. Even so, there has not

yet been time to achieve leaders' ambition for pupils to make strong progress across subjects.

- Another line of enquiry focused on how effectively writing is taught, and whether pupils make good enough progress from their starting points. This is because while the school's published assessments show that pupils typically do at least as well as others nationally, fewer most-able pupils in Year 2 attained the higher standard in writing than in reading and mathematics in 2018. Early years children, while performing in line with the national average in writing in 2018, did less well than in previous years.
- Leaders took effective action to analyse and address any gaps in pupils' learning. During a visit to the early years, I saw how strongly children's writing is valued and celebrated in classrooms. Children were keen to point out where their writing was displayed on 'washing lines' and walls. Their work shows that, from an early age, they gain in confidence and secure the skills they need to be successful writers. For example, I saw that skilful phonics teaching makes learning fun, and is contributing well to children's writing development. Teachers plan exciting learning activities where children are invited to practise the writing skills they have learned. They encourage children to try out their growing knowledge of letters and sounds, such as writing spell recipes inspired by imaginative play in the sand tray. Adults intervene well during children's self-chosen activities to help children work out what they want to write.
- In key stage 1, work in pupils' books shows that most are making strong progress in writing from their starting points. Teachers provide frequent opportunities for pupils to apply and practise skills such as spelling, grammar and punctuation in their writing across different subjects.

### **Next steps for the school**

Leaders and those responsible for governance should ensure that:

- the wider curriculum is planned in more depth so that pupils make the same strong progress across a range of subjects as they do in English and mathematics
- teachers further improve their subject knowledge across the wider curriculum so that they can plan learning activities which are consistently purposeful
- the skills of subject leaders of the wider curriculum are further developed so that they contribute effectively to raising standards across subjects.

I am copying this letter to the chair of the board of trustees and the chief executive officer of the multi-academy trust. This letter will be published on the Ofsted website.

Yours sincerely

Judith Sumner  
**Ofsted Inspector**

## **Information about the inspection**

We discussed the lines of enquiry for this inspection, the school's evaluation of its performance and information about current pupils' progress and attainment. I held meetings with you, some of your senior and subject leaders, and a number of governors. I also spoke to the chief executive officer of the trust and one of the deputy executive officers.

I visited most classes and looked at a sample of pupils' books in order to evaluate the quality of teaching, learning and assessment. I spoke informally with pupils in classrooms about their learning and met formally with two groups of pupils to find out about their experiences in school. I looked at the procedures for safeguarding pupils, including how checks are made for the recruitment of staff and volunteers. I looked at behaviour and incident records, and examined a sample of safeguarding records. I held a discussion with the school's designated safeguarding lead. I took account of the views of 71 parents who responded to Ofsted's online questionnaire, Parent View, as well as the 42 responses parents made using the free-text service. I looked at the 28 responses to Ofsted's online staff survey and the one response to the pupils' online survey.