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Mrs Cecilia Mojzes, Headteacher
Mrs Rosie Cowan, Executive Headteacher
Essex Primary School
Sheridan Road
Manor Park
London
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Dear Mrs Mojzes and Mrs Cowan

Short inspection of Essex Primary School

Following my visit to the school on 27 March 2018 with Ann Pratt, Ofsted Inspector, 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 January 2014.

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.

Governors and parents agree that you are both strong and determined leaders. You have created an effective team of senior leaders and staff who share your vision for the school and your aspirations for all pupils to achieve highly. Together with your senior leadership team, you have worked effectively to improve continually the quality of teaching. This has had a marked improvement on pupils' outcomes. From low starting points, children achieve exceptionally well in the early years. The proportion of children achieving a good level of development has been above the national average for the past three years. Likewise, pupils' attainment at the end of key stage 1 has also been above average for the past two years in reading, writing and mathematics. In 2017, pupils' progress in key stage 2 was above average in reading and significantly above average in writing and mathematics. For the past three years, pupils have attained highly and were very well prepared for their secondary education.

You, together with governors, have addressed the areas for improvement identified at the last inspection. For example, you have strengthened the teaching of mathematics and revised the curriculum to include more opportunities to develop

pupils' problem-solving and reasoning skills. The culture of the school clearly incorporates 'challenge for all' and not only for the most able pupils. As a result, the proportion of pupils achieving the greater-depth standards in mathematics has increased throughout the school. Leaders and governors have an excellent understanding of the school's strengths and priorities for improvement and have the full support of staff to achieve these.

Your high expectations are shared by all. Throughout the day, we saw consistently strong practice, highly ambitious staff and pupils' excellent attitudes to learning. Pupils are happy, engaged and keen to talk about their learning. The school's caring ethos is valued by pupils and their families. Your work with parents is particularly strong, including their involvement in school-based projects and workshops to support their children's learning. You know your school community very well. You rightly identify the need to continually look for ways to engage parents and carers, particularly in supporting the school's drive to improve pupils' reading skills.

Safeguarding is effective.

Pupils' well-being is at the heart of your work. All pupils, including those whose circumstances make them vulnerable, are very well supported by a strong pastoral and safeguarding team. You make sure that checks on staff suitability are robust and that records related to child protection are of high quality. The designated safeguarding lead and her team ensure that staff are well trained to report any concerns they may have about pupils' welfare. The school's work with other professionals, such as counsellors and family support agencies, is well thought out to ensure that pupils and their families have whatever they need to feel safe.

The curriculum is well planned to help parents and pupils understand safeguarding matters. Pupils are taught how to stay safe online and have a good understanding of the different forms of bullying. The responses to the staff, pupil and parent surveys are overwhelmingly positive about how safe children feel in school. Governors make sure that safeguarding procedures are fit for purpose and meet requirements.

Inspection findings

- The first line of enquiry related to pupils' reading, particularly in key stage 2. Last year, although pupils made strong progress in reading, the proportion of Year 6 pupils that reached the expected standard was lower than in writing and mathematics.
- You have successfully established a whole-school focus on reading. Leaders, staff and pupils all speak positively about the school's strategies to raise the profile of reading and develop pupils' reading skills. You introduced new approaches to the teaching of reading throughout the school. These are already having a very positive effect, particularly on pupils' understanding of vocabulary and texts. A strong emphasis on 'word of the day', for example, and the continuous focus on developing pupils' comprehension and language skills are effective. Group reading sessions with teaching staff offer regular and well-planned opportunities

for pupils to clarify, ask questions and summarise the texts they read. We saw the positive impact of these sessions in action.

- A variety of whole-school initiatives, such as the pupils' 'reading council' and the 'reading world cup', all help to broaden pupils' repertoire of books. Senior leaders read with targeted pupils each day. Additional support staff deliver well-planned interventions to develop pupils' reading skills, particularly those pupils who speak English as an additional language.
- These changes have been successful. The school's assessment information shows that a higher proportion of pupils in Year 6 are on track to reach the expected standards in reading this year. Furthermore, the number of pupils working at the expected standards in other year groups is very high. The improvements to the teaching of reading have also resulted in a far greater number of pupils working at greater depth in each year group. You are continually reviewing the new approaches to reading and acknowledge the need to embed these fully so that they are consistently of the highest quality throughout the school.
- The next key line of enquiry focused on the lower-ability pupils in key stage 2. This was because last year this group of pupils in Year 6 did not make the same strong progress as the others.
- You, together with leaders, analyse carefully the progress information for all pupils. You set challenging targets and expect lower-ability pupils to make accelerated progress. Your work is having an impact.
- In lessons and in pupils' books we found that teachers' expectations are high for all pupils. Those with lower starting points are very well supported to achieve the end-of-year expectations. We saw rapid progress, particularly in pupils' writing books. Pupils' learning is well planned, including opportunities for challenge. All adults, including support staff, are clearly aware of pupils' individual targets and next steps in learning. I am confident that lower-ability pupils are very well supported by leaders and staff to make strong progress in their learning.
- We also agreed to look at how well teachers in key stage 1 challenge the middle-ability pupils to achieve the greater-depth standards. Last year, although pupils made strong progress, the proportion of middle-ability pupils achieving the higher standards was lower than average.
- Our visits to lessons with your deputy headteacher, and a review of the work in pupils' books, show that these pupils are making strong progress. Teachers know their pupils extremely well. As with all other groups, leaders monitor the progress of these pupils closely and put interventions in place swiftly to ensure that they achieve well. All staff are clear about what constitutes the greater-depth standards and the middle-ability pupils are challenged effectively to achieve these standards. We saw adults using very effective questioning to probe pupils' understanding and to deepen their learning. Your assessment information shows that almost a third of pupils in Year 2, for example, are already working at these higher standards.
- Finally, we looked at the wider curriculum. You feel that it is a strength of the school and I wanted to evaluate how well the curriculum contributes to pupils' academic and personal development.

- Pupils enjoy a broad and exciting curriculum that is well planned to reflect each year group's needs and interests. A wide range of enrichment activities take place to enhance what happens in the classroom. The wider curriculum is brought to life by visits, visitors and a range of practical workshops both inside and outdoors.
- You ensure that all learning has a purpose and make strong links between different subjects. We saw the impact of this in pupils' written work. Books and other texts are well chosen to extend pupils' reading skills in a range of subjects. Feedback to pupils is used very effectively to challenge pupils' thinking and to deepen their understanding in subjects such as history and geography. School productions, including the 'Mother Tongue' singing assembly, strongly promote pupils' awareness of diversity. Pupils' ability to sing songs in several languages is particularly impressive.
- Work in pupils' books is typically of a high standard. Pupils develop an understanding of other cultures and traditions through subjects such as religious education. Furthermore, you have explained how the use of technology has improved significantly since the previous inspection. Pupils are keen to use up-to-date technology to develop their computing skills and to support their learning in other subjects.
- As with English, mathematics and science, governors hold leaders of other subjects to account effectively. For example, leaders deliver presentations to governors and write termly reports on the standards achieved in their subject areas. You and the governors monitor the quality of the wider curriculum extremely well.
- Leaders are continually looking for ways to enrich pupils' experiences. You go above and beyond to make sure that the school's curriculum is engaging and exciting. As a result, pupils develop strong knowledge, understanding and skills in a range of subjects. The photographs around the school, displays of pupils' work and our discussions with pupils all emphasise the success of the school's curriculum on pupils' learning and personal well-being.

Next steps for the school

Leaders and those responsible for governance should ensure that:

- leaders continue to embed the approaches to the teaching of reading so that these are highly effective in each year group.

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

Yours sincerely

Gary Rawlings
Ofsted Inspector

Information about the inspection

Inspectors met with you and the deputy headteachers throughout the day to discuss the key lines of enquiry. We met with the English subject leader and the special educational needs coordinator and spoke informally with other members of staff. I met with four governors, including the chair of governors, and held a meeting with your school improvement partner from the local authority. We spoke with pupils and listened to pupils read. I met with a group of pupils formally to discuss their views. My colleague attended an assembly led by pupils. I also spoke with a group of Year 4 pupils as they returned from a reading workshop at a local secondary school. Inspectors considered the views of pupils, staff and parents through their responses to Ofsted's surveys. Inspectors visited lessons in key stages 1 and 2, including the teaching of French and physical education, toured the school and reviewed pupils' work in books, subject files and on display to evaluate each of the key lines of enquiry. Inspectors looked at a range of documents, including information related to safeguarding, pupils' achievements and leaders' monitoring of teaching, learning and assessment.