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Mrs Michelle Aldred
Headteacher
James Dixon Primary School
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Dear Mrs Aldred

Short inspection of James Dixon Primary School

Following my visit to the school on 22 January 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 February 2013.

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 you have worked hard with leaders and governors to build on the school's positive culture. The school has a welcoming and friendly atmosphere. Pupils take pride in their school and enjoy learning. They are polite, friendly and respectful. One pupil said, 'I love school, I can be with my friends, they look after me.' Pupils learn about different religions, cultures and traditions, which prepares them well for life in modern Britain. British values are a significant feature of the school; for example, pupils in Year 6 visit law courts, elections are held for head boy and head girl and the school council debates important school issues.

Following the previous inspection, leaders were asked to ensure faster progress in writing. You have increased the levels of challenge in lessons and teachers plan activities so that pupils can edit and improve their work. This has resulted in pupils making progress in key stage 2 which is well above the national average. The school has a focus on expanding pupils' vocabulary so that they are able to read a wide range of books and enrich their writing. Teachers' questioning encourages pupils to think about unfamiliar words and discuss their meaning by drawing on their general knowledge. This enables pupils to become independent and confident learners. Pupils work hard in class; they listen well and are motivated learners.

The senior leadership team and staff are well supported by a committed and reflective governing body. The academy director of primary and the academy advisory head teacher for primary schools know the school well. Together with the governing body, they offer timely support and a good level of challenge to leaders. For example, the

governors and members of the trust ask probing questions regarding pupils' progress and outcomes. Governors have a clear understanding of the school's strengths and areas for development and play a key role in the strategic direction of the school.

The behaviour of pupils around the school, in the playground and in lessons is good. The school works hard to ensure that all pupils follow the school code of conduct. Peer mediators are selected from Year 5 pupils and trained to provide support on the playground. Where possible they help resolve differences. However, they also engage the help of staff if any problems arise. Pupils told me that they know teachers and other staff take their concerns seriously and there is always someone to ask for help. Pupils also said that bullying is rare and not tolerated in the school and staff help to sort out any problems.

Most parents and carers spoke positively about the school. They said that they are kept well informed about their child's learning and progress and believe that there is a good level of challenge and support. One parent said, 'Children are challenged every day.' Parents said that the amount of homework pupils receive is appropriate to their age group. Most parents believe that school leaders listen and act upon parental concerns. One parent commented, 'My children have become confident individuals because they have been taught how to think independently but be considerate and mindful of others at all times.'

Safeguarding is effective.

All staff and governors are well trained and know the school's procedures for raising concerns about pupils. Leaders devote a day to safeguarding training and provide regular briefings to ensure that all staff have up-to-date knowledge and understanding of safeguarding requirements. Records are of a high quality and show that leaders take swift action should the need arise. Leaders know their pupils and families well. Those responsible for safeguarding work very effectively with external agencies to help keep pupils safe from harm. They are relentless in ensuring that other agencies act promptly and appropriately to ensure the safety and well-being of pupils.

Pupils have a very good knowledge of keeping safe. For example, they are able to explain how to block inappropriate messages when online. They speak confidently about the dangers associated with computers and mobile phones. They said that they learn about e-safety in lessons and can speak to teachers about any concerns or questions they may have in this area. Pupils also said that assemblies remind them how to keep safe in their local community.

Inspection findings

- Leaders and governors have an accurate understanding of the school's strengths and where improvement is needed. Leaders are rightly focusing on improving pupils' achievement in mathematics. In 2018, assessments showed that Year 6 pupils made average progress in mathematics which was broadly in line with all pupils nationally. However, the most able pupils attained less well at the higher standard. In 2018, assessments showed that Year 2 pupils did less well at the expected standard and at

the higher standard than all pupils nationally. Together with senior and subject leaders, you have introduced a range of initiatives to raise standards in mathematics. You have appointed a new leader of mathematics who has attended training for mathematics mastery teaching. A series of professional development training sessions for teachers have been developed so that they become more confident in teaching mathematics. The subject leader is being supported by senior leaders and the academy primary improvement team.

- In class pupils try hard to complete their work and explain their answers. However, many pupils do not have the mathematical vocabulary or the conceptual understanding to be competent in mathematics. Pupils make mistakes in their working out and are unsure how to complete their work accurately. Pupils in key stage 1 have access to concrete materials to help them but they are not able to use these to assist their learning. Class teachers do not consistently check pupils' understanding and this leads to pupils' errors. The impact on improving pupils' mathematics is reduced when inaccuracies are not identified swiftly.
- You have introduced daily mathematics fluency sessions which are improving pupils' knowledge of number and helping them learn their tables. There is a focus on improving pupils' ability to reason and explain mathematically. Although this is in its infancy, there is evidence that pupils are developing in confidence when using mathematical language and are trying to explain how problems may be solved. Pupils are beginning to use more efficient strategies when attempting to answer questions and solve problems. However, there is more work to be done in this area.
- Next we agreed to evaluate the impact of provision on outcomes for disadvantaged pupils. This is an area that the school has prioritised for improvement. Assessment data show that these pupils in key stage 1 do not attain in line with their peers or other pupils nationally. However, the reading and writing progress of disadvantaged pupils in Year 6 was well above the national average.
- We considered how effective leaders' actions were in identifying the barriers to learning faced by this group. We found that the school knows the needs of these pupils and their families well. You have initiated a wide range of strategies to support disadvantaged pupils. There is a marked improvement in the attendance of disadvantaged pupils due to the work of leaders and the family worker. However, leaders do not identify pupils' barriers to learning with sufficient precision, which limits their progress and attainment.
- Finally, we agreed to consider how effectively the wider curriculum develops pupils' knowledge, understanding and skills. The school has developed a creative curriculum that engages and stimulates pupils. Pupils said that they enjoy learning and spoke confidently and enthusiastically about a wide range of subjects. One pupil said, 'We learn really exciting things, we learn about e-safety, other cultures, forest school, music and the Romans. Teachers make learning fun.'
- Work in pupils' books, displays around the school and pupils' assessment portfolios show that pupils are accessing a broad and rich curriculum. The school has developed a wider curriculum which embeds the key skills of reading and writing across other subjects. This wider curriculum promotes pupils' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development effectively. There are planned trips and excursions which enhance learning. Pupils visit places of worship, museums, libraries, law courts and other

places of interest. A range of visitors come into the school to enhance learning, for example, authors, police officers, faith leaders and other professionals. Music is a high priority in the school; pupils sing confidently and the steel pans are played to a very high standard. Pupils are able to talk clearly about their learning. A Year 4 pupil told me, 'The Anglo-Saxons lived in Britain a long time ago and their houses were very different to ours today. They didn't go to school like us or get a good education.' Pupils have a good knowledge of the wider curriculum. They are able to speak about many subjects with confidence.

Next steps for the school

Leaders and those responsible for governance should ensure that:

- pupils' outcomes in mathematics are as strong as in reading and writing
- leaders identify barriers to learning with more precision so that disadvantaged pupils achieve to the best of their ability.

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

Yours sincerely

Frances Hawkes
Ofsted Inspector

Information about the inspection

During the inspection I held meetings with you, the deputy headteacher, two assistant headteachers, one responsible for curriculum, the other for assessment, the mathematics subject leader and the teacher responsible for special educational needs and disabilities, two governors, the academy director of primary and the advisory headteacher of Swale Academies Trust. I evaluated the work in pupils' books with the deputy headteacher and curriculum subject leaders. I visited classes from early years to Year 6 with senior leaders to observe teaching and looked at pupils' work. I spoke to pupils in lessons and around the school. I spoke informally to parents in the playground. I took account of the 63 parent responses to the Ofsted online survey, Parent View, 45 pupil responses and 24 staff responses. I scrutinised documentation on the school's website, the school's self-evaluation documents and current performance information about pupils' progress. Records about keeping pupils safe were evaluated.