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Mr Seb Sales
Headteacher
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Dear Mr Sales

Short inspection of Connaught Junior School

Following my visit to the school on 17 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 your predecessor school was judged to be good in November 2012.

This school continues to be good.

The leadership team has maintained the good quality of education in the school since the last inspection. You had not been in post long when the predecessor school was last inspected. You have been on a relentless programme of school improvement since then. You have led your staff successfully so that the school is now in a place where all recognise and embrace its 'caring, confident and committed' values.

You have overseen the expansion of the school so that it is now much bigger and is the first choice for many parents locally. You remain committed to improving the buildings so that the site is a comfortable, safe and secure environment for learning. The outside spaces are being improved constantly and now include, for example, the sensory garden and the outside gym. The school uniform, including the branded physical education kit, is a simple example of the pride you take in the appearance of the school. Pupils wear their uniform with pride.

The vast majority of pupils thrive at the school. They are happy and confident. The vast majority of parents are delighted with the quality of education provided and the caring and nurturing culture that you have built. Pupils benefit from a wide range of experiences that enhance and enrich their time in school. I observed them acquiring new knowledge and skills in sports, music, cooking, pottery and French. These activities support a strong core curriculum, which has an appropriate focus on English and mathematics. Activities also help pupils develop personally, spiritually, morally, socially and culturally.

You showed me compelling evidence of the rigorous checks you make on pupils when they enter the school. This information includes the outcomes of tests, reviews of pupils' reading, writing and mathematical knowledge and skills and comparisons with pupils' results from key stage 1. We agreed that many pupils had been inaccurately and overgenerously assessed in some of the feeder infant schools. I checked this by looking in pupils' books and comparing their work with age-related expectations in the new national curriculum.

Pupils make strong progress from their starting points once they enter Connaught Junior School. This is due to highly effective teaching. Teachers and teaching assistants plan together cooperatively so that time is used efficiently in lessons. All teachers manage their classrooms and pupils' behaviour effectively. Pupils respond to simple, well-rehearsed techniques. Pupils participate in their lessons enthusiastically. Teachers are equally enthusiastic. Teaching focuses, especially in mathematics, on closing any gaps in pupils' knowledge, skills and understanding. Teachers encourage pupils to work independently to allow staff extra time to work with those at risk of falling behind.

When the predecessor school was last inspected, you were asked to focus on quickening pupils' learning. Since then, you have built an impressive system for checking how well each pupil is doing and can now pinpoint exactly what they need to do next. You share this information openly with governors so that they, too, can see the relative performance of pupils and groups of pupils. Teachers update this information whenever they have suitable evidence of learning gains. Teachers also use this approach to prevent any pupil from falling too far behind and to plan for additional learning support, often provided through pupil conferences. The latter are focused pieces of work led by class teachers straight after the main lesson.

You rightly judge the school to be good, with many strong features. You recognise that published historical information about pupils' progress from key stage 1 to 2 does not reflect the strong progress made by current pupils. You have a sensible and well-thought-through plan for addressing this, which is fully supported by the governors.

Safeguarding is effective.

Leaders ensure that all safeguarding arrangements meet requirements. All records are suitably detailed and the checks undertaken on persons wishing to work or volunteer at the school are thorough and updated regularly. You keep your own safeguarding knowledge up to date by attending good-quality training. You insist that all staff access such training too, as relevant to their roles. You have created a clear set of safeguarding policies. These provide clear guidance for pupils, parents and staff should they need them.

During the 'friendship council' I observed, pupils talked sensibly about how they had learned to keep themselves safe online and about the dangers of cyber bullying. This is just one example of how you have created an effective culture of safeguarding. You also pay attention to pupils' mental health and well-being.

Similarly, and justifiably, you have put in place a series of mindful measures to support the staff's well-being and maintain their high morale. They appreciate this.

Inspection findings

- You are rightly concentrating on making sure that published outcomes for pupils reflect properly the rates of progress pupils make during their time at Connaught Junior School. You are using a system for tracking pupils' attainment in an exemplary manner. This enables all staff to see how well pupils are doing and to measure their progress. The system also allows you to look carefully at any emerging patterns or trends. This analysis supports your planning for or changes to the arrangements for teaching or the ways in which the curriculum is delivered.
- Leaders have put in place a range of measures for improving outcomes in mathematics. For example, you sought advice actively from the local mathematics hub on how to improve teaching in the subject. This year, you reviewed thoroughly the answers pupils gave to some of the questions in the Year 6 mathematics test in 2016. You recognised that pupils needed more help with reasoning if they were to go on to higher levels of attainment. As a result of these leadership activities, you have changed, over time, the way in which mathematics is taught. You have been able to recruit specialist mathematics teachers, which has added subject-specific strength to the staff team. Consequently, the teaching of mathematics is impressive. Teachers use a wide range of techniques. They plan a good variety of activities. Pupils are able to select tasks which help them 'climb' through various degrees of difficulty in lessons. The local mathematics hub now draws on some of your practice to help other schools in the areas.
- Some pupils, especially several of the disadvantaged pupils whose work I looked at, need more help with setting their work out neatly. This will help to guide them through the logical steps necessary to solve mathematical problems, as well as helping them to take pride in the presentation of their work.
- Leaders have created a strong system of assessment. Pupils are assessed on arrival so that their prior learning can be compared with age-related expectations. This process is formidable but necessary, given the variation in outcomes achieved by pupils at the end of key stage 1. In addition, leaders have built an effective assessment system across the school. Teachers check pupils' learning in lessons regularly. Teachers and teaching assistants assess accurately pupils' work. Staff record pupils' gains in knowledge, skills and understanding. Staff compare pupils' work with that of similar pupils in other schools locally. These processes are fair, detailed and secure. Leaders ensure that the school's work is checked by appropriately skilled and experienced advisers. This means that staff are not at risk of becoming complacent. You have built a culture of continuous improvement.

Next steps for the school

Leaders and those responsible for governance should ensure that:

- pupils, especially those who are disadvantaged, close rapidly any gaps in their knowledge, skills or understanding caused by weak or overgenerous assessment in feeder infant schools
- all pupils, especially those who are disadvantaged, take as much pride in the presentation of their work as they do in their appearance.

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

Yours sincerely

Dr Simon Hughes
Her Majesty's Inspector

Information about the inspection

I observed learning with senior leaders in all year groups and most classes. The deputy headteacher accompanied me and two pupils in Year 6 on a tour of the school. I examined a wide range of documentation, including leaders' self-evaluation and the school's development plan. I met with you frequently throughout the inspection and with other leaders. I met with members of the governing body and conducted a phone conversation with your school improvement adviser. I listened to four Year 3 pupils reading and spoke with many pupils formally and informally. I took into account 115 responses to Parent View, Ofsted's online survey, 14 responses to Ofsted's confidential pupil survey and 27 responses to Ofsted's confidential staff survey. I spoke to several parents informally and considered over 80 free text responses submitted via Parent View.