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Andrew Tagg
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Dear Mr Tagg

Short inspection of Tylers Green Middle School

Following my visit to the school on 19 January 2016, 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 September 2010.

This school continues to be good.

The leadership team has maintained the good quality of education in the school since the last inspection. The school is a happy, caring place. Pupils have a positive and friendly outlook and speak highly of their school. They enjoy learning and are thoughtful and keen to explore and discuss ideas with teachers and one another. Well attended after-school clubs, such as cooking and sport, as well as educational visits effectively promote pupils' wider learning. The school has a culture of emphasising and rewarding positive attitudes and behaviour. Pupils are well prepared for life in modern Britain. Parents value the school and many compliment your leadership and the improvements you have brought about.

Since taking up post in 2013, you have successfully identified and addressed areas that needed attention. You rightly recognised the need to increase capacity at senior leadership level. You re-established the post of deputy headteacher in 2014. This secured the leadership capacity necessary to reverse declining achievement and move the school forward. You made improving mathematics a priority. Introducing a mathematics specialist brought in the necessary expertise to improve provision and support other teachers with their teaching and subject knowledge. This has helped exemplify good practice and ensure pupils receive work at the right level of challenge. As a result, noticeably more pupils make strong progress in mathematics than when you arrived. Your more recent drive to improve writing across the school is also proving successful. During the inspection we witnessed pupils writing confidently, skilfully and at length across a range of subjects. The topics pupils were

writing about engaged their interest and they knew which aspects of their writing needed attention. In a couple of topic lessons pupils were not applying their knowledge of what makes good writing well enough when writing a letter. Additional work is needed to ensure that improved approaches become routine in every subject. Although pupils in the school typically read well, over time few have made really strong progress in their reading. Last term you introduced a new reading scheme to help address this. Pupils now undergo regular tests which identify their reading level. Pupils then read books specifically identified to help them progress to the next level. This is helping leaders and teachers gain a better understanding of pupils' strengths and identify who needs further support. You are better placed than previously to secure strong achievement in reading.

When the school was last inspected, the inspector recognised the many strengths of the school including pupils' achievement, personal development, behaviour and well-being. They identified two areas for specific attention. One was to improve the accuracy of teachers' assessments, ensuring that work in lessons provides the right next steps for pupils and feedback helps pupils improve. The second was to improve the consistency with which middle leaders evaluate the impact of their work on pupils' achievement. Leaders have worked effectively to improve day-to-day assessment and feedback. The use of success criteria against which teachers and pupils can assess their progress and plan next steps is now common practice. Teachers' feedback based on these criteria, helps pupils improve. Since the last inspection there have been significant changes in middle leadership.

Rightly, the most pressing recent priority for middle leaders has been to plan for and meet the requirements of the new National Curriculum. Developing consistency in monitoring was necessarily second to this. Middle leaders are now becoming more involved in monitoring the quality of teaching. Recently the deputy headteacher has been involving them in lesson observations and work scrutiny. You recognise that ensuring that all middle leaders are consistently effective in monitoring and evaluating the impact of their leadership is a key next step. This is particularly the case for those leading foundation subjects.

The changes to the National Curriculum and how it is assessed have required you to make significant changes to your assessment practice. This is currently a work in progress. The most advanced aspect of this work is your new approach to assessing pupils' achievement in writing. A helpful grid for each year group enables pupils and teachers to see at a glance how well pupils are doing in securing the writing skills expected for their age and what their next steps in learning are. Currently, leaders are developing the same approach for mathematics and reading. Further work is planned to apply this approach to assessing pupils' progress in other subjects.

Safeguarding is effective.

The leadership team has ensured that all safeguarding arrangements are fit for purpose and records are detailed and of high quality. Checks on the identity and suitability of staff and any volunteers who may come into contact with pupils are robust, well managed and recorded. Secure records are kept relating to any cases where a pupil may be at risk of harm. Your up-to-date safeguarding policy is helpfully

complemented by a safeguarding notice board which provides detailed advice on what to do in the case of any concern. All staff joining the school receive the staff handbook which signposts them to the policy and the notice board.

Pupils and parents agree that the school is a safe place and pupils are well looked after. Governors have checked that pupils know who to go to if they have any concerns. Lessons and assemblies on e-safety and personal safety help pupils learn how to keep themselves safe. Most pupils have no experience of bullying, and the few who do say it is dealt with well. Leaders make sure they check on the nature of any bullying that occurs to determine if there is a discriminatory or prejudice aspect to it so this can be addressed if needed.

Inspection findings

- Leaders have recognised and reversed a declining trend in mathematics and are taking effective action to improve achievement in writing and to strengthen progress in reading.
- Governors keep a close eye on the school's performance. They use information from regular pupil and parent surveys, alongside reports from external reviews, to verify information leaders present to them. They challenge leaders when there is evidence of underperformance and check that actions are being taken to address it. Governors look closely at disadvantaged pupils' achievement. However, leaders do not provide information about the exact impact of each aspect of pupil premium spending, so governors are not well placed to ensure highly effective use of this funding.
- Leaders had established clear systems for recording, presenting and reviewing pupils' progress under the old National Curriculum. This enabled teachers to have a better understanding of the progress pupils made and to plan their next steps in learning. Leaders meet with teachers every half term to discuss the progress of their class and to ensure action is taken to redress underachievement.
- The system for tracking and reviewing pupils' progress has been adapted to record how well pupils are making progress in the new English and mathematics curriculum. This captures whether each pupil is currently on track to secure or master the required learning for the year. The analysis as it stands is not entirely helpful. It does not show how many pupils are making good progress in relation to their starting points, and this requires further development.
- The school's curriculum is broad and balanced. Pupils develop skills and knowledge in a range of subjects through the study of a specific theme each half-term. In the main, the requirements for what should be taught in each subject are suitably covered. However, information on the school curriculum map suggests this is not always the case. For example, some design and technology (D&T) activities such as making Roman-style pottery are more akin to art and are unlikely to promote good progress in D&T.
- Pupils typically make good progress in the school. Pupils' progress in mathematics has improved over the last three years. By the end of Year 6, in 2015, pupils' achievement in mathematics was in line with that seen

nationally. Over time, pupils' progress in reading has been in line with that seen nationally. On average, pupils' achievement in writing by the end of Year 6 was below the national figure in 2015. Pupils currently in the school are typically making good progress with their writing.

- The school has only a small number of disadvantaged pupils. Therefore, published performance data about this group are not meaningful. However, school information suggests there is more variation in the progress of this small group of pupils across the school than for other groups. In the main, these pupils make reasonable progress. However, they are not consistently making the rapid progress needed to catch up from any previous underachievement at Key Stage 1.
- Teachers typically plan lively lessons that engage pupils' interest, provide suitable levels of challenge and help pupils learn well.
- Pupils value the emphasis placed on rewarding good behaviour. They typically behave extremely well in lessons and around the school. Relationships are positive and routines well established. Pupils arrive at school on time and attendance is high.
- Parents are very positive about the school. They remark on the improvements made since the last inspection.

Next steps for the school

Leaders and those responsible for governance should ensure that:

- tracking and the analysis of achievement in all subjects enable leaders to see at a glance how well pupils are achieving given their starting points and in relation to their age
- the school's curriculum plans enable pupils to acquire all the skills and knowledge required in each subject
- subject leaders routinely check the quality of teaching, learning and assessment in the subject they lead
- leaders and governors regularly review the proportion of disadvantaged pupils in the school who are below the level expected for their age and not catching up quickly
- the use of the pupil premium is helping to secure rapid progress for the pupils it is being used for.

I am copying this letter to the Chair of the Governing Body, the Regional Schools Commissioner and the Director of Children's Services for Buckinghamshire County Council. This letter will be published on the Ofsted website.

Yours sincerely

Diana Choulerton
Her Majesty's Inspector

Information about the inspection

I met with you, other leaders, teachers, the Chair of the Governing Body and two other governors. We visited parts of eight lessons. We also scrutinised a selection of pupils' work to look at their writing and topic work. I took account of 69 pupil survey responses, 15 staff survey responses and 69 responses by parents to Ofsted's online questionnaire, Parent View. In addition, I considered 28 parent responses by free text or letter. I also spoke with some parents at the start of the school day and with groups of pupils before school, and at break and lunchtime. I analysed a range of the school's documentation, including leaders' checks on pupils' progress, the school's improvement plan, curriculum planning and safeguarding policies and procedures. I also took into account reports and reviews carried out by the Buckinghamshire Learning Trust and those of an external consultant. We discussed your own evaluation of the school's effectiveness.