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Leigh Wolmarans
Headteacher
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Dear Mr Wolmarans

Short inspection of Lings Primary School

Following my visit to the school on 2 February 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 your predecessor school was judged to be good in March 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 are a highly committed and creative headteacher. Since the last inspection, you have continued to develop your vision for creating a rounded and exciting education that develops every aspect of your pupils' lives. You have successfully built a team of committed senior leaders and staff who realise this vision on a day-to-day basis in your school. You have a good understanding of the school's strengths and areas for development. You and your team are committed to ensuring that all pupils achieve success and that any weaknesses in pupils' learning are swiftly addressed and eradicated.

Your pupils are great ambassadors for their school. During my visit, they were unfailingly polite and courteous, always wanting to discuss their learning and say how much they enjoy their school. This is true from the oldest pupils to the youngest children in the Reception class. Pupils are inquisitive, willing to discuss their views and listen well to others. This is because you have successfully created an ethos where learning is valued and embraced, and respect for others is highly regarded. Pupils clearly enjoy coming to the school because it is an exciting and challenging place to learn. The very high attendance rates are a testament to pupils' keenness to learn and grow, not only in mathematics, reading and writing but also

in dance, music, drama and sport. Pupils are able to take part in many activities held in the performing arts school at the weekend and in the many sporting clubs managed by the school. This contributes strongly to pupils' engagement in education in its widest sense.

Your parental community overwhelmingly agrees that Lings Primary School is supporting their children to improve in their learning. The high number of responses to Ofsted's online questionnaire, Parent View, and the number of text responses Ofsted received, demonstrate that you have gained the trust of the community. This is to the benefit of your pupils. One parent wrote, 'Lings Primary School is more than a school, it is a family and a community. Whether your child is in Reception or Year 6 you are treated the same...The opportunities offered at this school are exceptional and I really appreciate every one of the experiences my child has had.' Many parents in their responses echoed this sentiment.

You and your team know each individual pupil well. You carefully plan to overcome barriers to learning through focused pastoral support for pupils and their families. You systematically track pupils' attainment and progress and as a result, teachers know what pupils need to learn next to continue to improve. School information and the work in pupils' books show that pupils are making good progress in mathematics, reading and writing across the school. The vast majority of pupils work within age-related expectations. However, pupils' development in grammar, punctuation and spelling is not good enough. You and your senior leaders are addressing this urgently and the systematic teaching of this subject is now part of pupils' everyday experience. As a result, standards are rising and pupils are gaining the skills they need to become writers that are more fluent.

Children enter the school with skills and abilities that are below and, often, well below those typical for their age across all seven areas of learning. Your early years leader and her staff work hard to ensure the transition from home to school supports children to settle down quickly to learning. A high number of children need precise, targeted support to help them learn and develop. You and your team work well with external agencies to overcome barriers to learning so that all children make at least expected, and often good, progress as a result.

During the inspection, many children in the early years approached me to share their excitement in learning. A number of 'fairies' cast spells and wrote 'potions' in relation to the theme of *A midsummer night's dream*. Over the last three years, the proportion of children who achieved a good level of development has increased, but is still below the national average. School predictions for this current year indicate that the number of children who are on target to reach a good level of development is broadly in line with the national average. This would demonstrate even better progress than in previous years. However, girls make faster progress than boys and therefore boys are less well prepared for the next stage in their education. Although leaders have plans to address these gaps, these plans are not linked closely enough to the school's development plans. As a result, they are not checked as closely as they need to be by all school leaders.

The governing body is fully committed to supporting you to realise the vision of the school. Governors visit the school regularly to check the quality of education through meeting with pupils, looking at their work and attending training and senior management meetings. As a result, they have a sound understanding of the progress pupils make in their learning.

Safeguarding is effective.

You place the highest priority on keeping pupils safe and making sure their welfare concerns are at the forefront of school life. Leaders keep detailed and well-ordered information and meet regularly to review their actions to support those pupils and families who need extra help and guidance. Because of the high level of need, the governing body has ensured an increase in the number of staff who take leadership responsibility for safeguarding. This means that leaders attend all necessary meetings and work closely with external agencies to ensure pupils are safe and continuing to learn. You ensure that your staff have the appropriate training in a wide variety of issues such as female genital mutilation and preventing extremism and radicalisation. Parents expressed confidence that their children were safe at the school.

Inspection findings

- Leaders have a precise understanding of the school's strengths and areas for development. The school's self-evaluation is accurate and, consequently, actions for improvement are appropriate and focus on raising the attainment of pupils in the right areas.
- The headteacher is forward thinking and innovative. He is inspirational to staff, pupils and the wider community. Pupils want to engage in learning because they are proud of their school. This is as a direct result of the headteacher's vision for a well-rounded and diverse curriculum that develops pupils' social, moral, spiritual and cultural understanding very well.
- In 2015, the proportion of pupils making expected progress and more than expected progress in mathematics, reading, and writing was in line with other pupils nationally. Disadvantaged pupils made the same progress as their peers in all three subjects. Pupils' attainment is in line with the national average for mathematics, reading and writing. Although some pupils reach the higher standards, they are not yet in line with other pupils nationally.
- School leaders are successfully closing the learning gaps between disadvantaged pupils and their peers. Over the last three years, learning gaps between disadvantaged pupils and their peers have closed significantly in mathematics, reading, and writing. Gaps are now narrower than the national gaps between disadvantaged pupils and others.

- The staff team provide pupils with the support they need to make the best possible progress. Teachers plan lessons well and use every opportunity to develop pupils' understanding. During their lessons, pupils have many opportunities to discuss their learning with each other and with their teachers. This deepens their understanding of new concepts. As a result, they make good progress in learning across the curriculum.
- Teachers provide feedback to pupils in a variety of ways in line with the school policy. Teachers question pupils closely to check for misconceptions in learning. During the inspection, pupils spoken with in every class, including the early years, spoke confidently and shared their learning with the inspector. Pupils' commitment to learning, their engagement in lessons and their resilience to challenge speak highly of the ethos of 'set the standard' to which they all adhere.
- Leaders provide a broad and balanced curriculum. This has been instrumental in raising standards. The curriculum opens up the world for the pupils. Visits to the Royal Shakespeare Company, and work with professional artists, musicians and sports coaches ensure that pupils receive the best possible opportunities for learning. Pupils relish these opportunities and this has a direct impact on their learning in mathematics, reading and writing, and standards continue to rise.
- The learning environment fully supports high-quality teaching. Classrooms and shared spaces are bright and full of pupils' work. This speaks of how much pupils are valued and celebrated.
- Strong links with external agencies ensures that pupils' needs are met and any additional support needed is found quickly. The work of the safeguarding team is effective and pivotal in ensuring that pupils are helped to be kept safe while in the school.
- The school works very closely with other academies in the Northampton Academies Trust. As a result, leaders receive the necessary challenge and support to continue to improve. Resources are shared among the academies. This results in many pupils in the trust having access to a wider variety of opportunities such as working with a software company to develop educational games for a wider audience.

Next steps for the school

Leaders and those responsible for governance should ensure that:

- leaders link the developments in the early years more closely to whole-school development planning so that leaders at all levels take responsibility for children's outcomes and ensure learning gaps close between boys and girls

- learning gaps in pupils' grammar, punctuation and spelling close rapidly so that pupils reach standards at least in line with age-related expectations by the time they leave in Year 6.

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

Yours sincerely

Jan Connor
Her Majesty's Inspector

Information about the inspection

During the inspection, I met with you, the deputy headteacher, your Key Stage 2 leader, the special education needs leader and the home/school partnership leader. I met with the Chair and vice-chair of the Governing Body. I also met with two directors from the Northamptonshire Primary Academy Trust who work in partnership with the school. I toured the school on two occasions, visiting many classrooms twice to observe teaching, to speak with pupils and to look at their work in books. I visited the early years classrooms for a longer period and looked closely at the work in boys' learning journals in particular. I observed pupils' behaviour both in class and around the school. I considered a range of school documentation including assessment information, the school improvement plan and self-evaluation document. I took into account the 132 responses to Ofsted's online questionnaire, Parent View. I also took into account the 16 free text responses to Ofsted and the 25 staff questionnaires. I checked the single central register of recruitment checks and other documentation relating to safeguarding.