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Mrs Connie White  
Headteacher  
Kingsmoor Lower School  
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Dear Mrs White

### **Short inspection of Kingsmoor Lower School**

Following my visit to the school on 16 March 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 June 2011.

#### **This school continues to be good.**

The leadership team has maintained the good quality of education in the school since the last inspection. Kingsmoor pupils thoroughly enjoy learning and rise to their teachers' high expectations for learning and behaviour enthusiastically. Staff are proud to work at the school. They go the extra mile to ensure that pupils have useful resources readily available to support their learning. Classrooms are interesting and vibrant places for learning. Every space in the school is clean, tidy and well organised. Pupils take great pride in their work. Staff celebrate pupils' achievements by displaying their work in eye-catching ways to inspire them and help them to feel positive about learning. Most pupils attend school regularly and the school provides good support for the families of the very few who do not.

Working closely with other leaders and staff, you have developed a curriculum that fosters in pupils a strong desire for learning. It supports their spiritual, moral, social and cultural development extremely well. Pupils know the school's values; they understand them and they shine through when pupils talk about their school. Pupils told me that they appreciate the kindness and friendship pupils show towards each other; they feel extremely safe at school because they are looked after so well. Their behaviour is exemplary. They were also excited about learning new things. As one of the oldest pupils said, 'I have learnt loads in key stage 2 and I feel completely ready for the changeover to middle school.' Some parents commented that 'the school has a community feel with a sense of people pulling together', and 'my child goes into school with a smile on her face and six hours later she is still smiling'.

Teaching is typically good or better. It is structured very carefully to make sure that pupils learn new skills and concepts in the right order and that they make good progress every year. However, approaches to teaching and learning that encourage creativity and are responsive to pupils' own ideas in subjects such as art, craft and design or science, for example, are not widespread. Pupils carry out their teachers' planned activities diligently, but there is not enough scope for them to explore their own creative ideas or for teachers to capitalise on the unexpected or accidental.

You, the deputy headteacher and leaders of each key stage talk about your work passionately. You are all focused sharply on raising standards continuously. Checks are regular to ensure that all groups of pupils, including the most able, those with special needs or disability and disadvantaged pupils who are supported through the pupil premium grant, make good progress in reading, writing and mathematics. Effective leadership has resulted in significant improvement, for example in writing. Boys and girls are enjoying writing and we saw many examples of good writing on displays and in pupils' exercise books.

Governors fulfil their legal duties. They know the school well because they come in and see teaching and learning in action: they look at the school's assessment information about pupils' learning and check to see that pupils receiving extra help are making better progress. Governors consider the budget carefully, ensuring that they achieve good value for money. They spend the school's allocation wisely to achieve better outcomes for pupils' learning, especially disadvantaged pupils who are supported through the pupil premium. Even so, governors allocated a small amount of a special grant intended for sports (PE and sport premium) to support the swimming programme and this contravenes the government's conditions. This decision was taken long before the government updated its guidance in October 2015 on how the money should be spent.

You and governors have pressed on determinedly with making the improvements that inspectors recommended in the previous inspection to make the school even better.

- Leadership is strong at all levels. Your plans for improvement are linked closely to teaching and learning. Checks are regular to ensure that all groups of pupils, including the most able, those with special needs or disability and disadvantaged pupils who are supported through the pupil premium grant, make good progress through consistently good teaching.
- You and governors know your community well. The school communicates its commitment to promote inclusion, equality and diversity within the community effectively through the curriculum.
- Teaching and learning in the early years have improved. Most children move into Year 1 having reached a good level of development to prepare them for the national curriculum. Their early reading, writing and number skills develop well through good teaching.

## **Safeguarding is effective.**

Safeguarding is effective because it is a high priority and everyone shares responsibility for keeping pupils safe. Systems for recruitment of staff are robust, with all statutory checks being made to ensure their suitability to work with children. Electronic and written records are of high quality. They are detailed and thorough. Sensitive documents are stored securely. Risk assessments are carried out thoroughly for educational visits. The school does not hesitate to make referrals to different external agencies when appropriate. A single point of contact coordinates each case to ensure that concerns are acted on quickly. Staff and governors receive regular training to update their knowledge of safeguarding. The governing body ensures that pupils at risk of radicalisation or extremism are identified through its 'Prevent' duty and staff are trained to recognise the signs. Relationships with the local police are positive and relevant information about vulnerable pupils is shared. The school works closely with pupils and parents to develop their understanding, for example of e-safety (keeping children safe online when using electronic media).

## **Inspection findings**

- Leaders, governors and staff create a positive culture of success for all, inclusion and equality of opportunity. Strong values are communicated to pupils and promoted through the curriculum, which fosters their spiritual, moral, social and cultural development exceptionally well. Pupils speak highly of their school. Staff are proud to work in it. Most parents are very satisfied with all that the school provides for their children.
- Together with other leaders and governors, you provide effective leadership with a clear focus on good teaching and learning. You judge teaching and learning extremely accurately, ensuring that leaders gather information from a range of sources as evidence to support their findings. Your judgements have been endorsed by the local authority and match my findings. You share your priorities for improvement with parents in a format that they can understand easily.
- Safeguarding systems and policies are implemented thoroughly and consistently. The single central record was complete and all relevant paperwork for staff recruitment intact and stored centrally and securely. All adults working with children regularly have statutory checks made on their suitability.
- You have established a rigorous system for checking those pupils whose attendance falls below 90%. The attendance officer from the local authority is involved with a very few families whose children do not attend regularly. In addition, a new pastoral support role has been introduced from September 2015 to work with pupils and improve their well-being and attendance. Fixed penalty notices are issued if needs be. Attendance is gradually improving and is currently 95.6%, which is close to the national average.

- Workshops for parents provide useful updates on keeping their children safe online. Staff are trained regularly in e-safety and 'Prevent'. They ensure that pupils know how to keep themselves safe. Staff are alert to, and report, any signs that a pupil may be at risk. Referrals made to involve external professionals are timely.
- Staff changes have been managed well and with success in recruiting and retaining good teachers. Training needs are considered fully, alongside a rigorous system for appraisal. Governors work with you to ensure that there is a clear link between performance management outcomes and pay increases.
- Governors both support and challenge you. They are able to form an independent view of the school's work because they visit regularly, they know how to interpret data and take into account parents' and pupils' views. They check to see that extra help that some pupils receive results in their better learning.
- The governing body ensures that the school's budget achieves good value for money, although spending of a small amount of the sports premium in the 2015/16 school year does not meet the government's current conditions for spending.
- Work we saw in pupils' books and the school's most recent assessment information about pupils' learning showed that, from low starting points on entry, all groups of pupils are making good progress. This includes pupils with special educational needs or disability and disadvantaged pupils. In 2015, attainment in reading, writing and mathematics was in line with national averages. The most-able pupils' attainment was above the national average in reading and writing because daily teaching challenges them.
- By the time Year 4 pupils left the school in 2015, their attainment in reading, writing and mathematics was above that of other pupils in Central Bedfordshire.
- The school has a robust system for checking learning in English and mathematics. Assessments in English and mathematics are double-checked internally and externally with other schools. They are accurate, as seen in the work in pupils' books. In other subjects, assessment practice is not as well developed.
- Displays of pupils' work around the school show evidence of extended pieces of writing across subjects. Topic books confirm that pupils have plentiful opportunities to apply their writing skills in other subjects such as geography, history and science.
- The new national curriculum has been implemented fully and the school's bi-annual curriculum plan has been adapted to ensure that pupils learn all that they should. The curriculum is broad, balanced and enriched with many extra-curricular activities, including many opportunities for pupils to learn outdoors.

- Pupils achieve well in singing and physical education as well as in English and mathematics. They take part in performances and competitive sports and have won many trophies as a result of their achievements.
- Outcomes in the early years have improved. The proportion of children reaching a good level of development before moving into Year 1 is above national figures. They make good progress in all areas of learning from low starting points on entry. Children are doing particularly well in developing their early literacy and number skills, which was identified as an area to improve in the previous inspection.
- Transition from each key stage to the next is thought through carefully so that it is seamless.

### **Next steps for the school**

Leaders and those responsible for governance should ensure that:

- the school's good practice in checking pupils' progress in English and mathematics is extended to all other subjects
- spending of the sports premium grant complies fully with the government's conditions
- approaches to teaching and learning that encourage creativity and responsiveness to pupils' own ideas are developed further.

I am copying this letter to the chair of the governing body and the director of children's services for Central Bedfordshire Council. This letter will be published on the Ofsted website.

Yours sincerely

Linda Killman  
**Her Majesty's Inspector**

### **Information about the inspection**

- Her Majesty's Inspector (HMI) gathered a wide range of evidence to judge the quality of teaching, learning and assessment. This included short observations of lessons in all classes, jointly with you, the sampling of pupils' current written work and discussions with leaders.
- The HMI talked to a wide range of pupils informally in classrooms. The school selected a group of six pupils from Year 4 to talk to the HMI about what it is like in school on a typical day.
- The HMI held meetings with you, the deputy headteacher and leaders of key stages 1 and 2. She met with the chair of the governing body and three other governors. A school improvement adviser from the local authority spoke to the HMI on the telephone.

- The HMI looked at a range of documentation including information about the school's self-evaluation and plans for future improvement.
- Policies and procedures for the safeguarding of pupils were examined, including mandatory checks made during the recruitment of new staff, arrangements for e-safety, referrals made to external agencies and risk assessments undertaken for educational visits.
- The views of 40 parents who responded to Ofsted's online questionnaire (Parent View) and a parent who came into school specially to meet the HMI were taken into account. Responses of 20 staff to the staff survey were considered.