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Mrs Rachael Hollinshead  
Headteacher  
Edlesborough School  
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Edlesborough  
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Dear Mrs Hollinshead

### **Short inspection of Edlesborough School**

Following my visit to the school on 21 June 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 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.

Much has been achieved since your appointment in September 2014. You have set about raising expectations and in doing so, establishing firm foundations from which the school can continue to improve. You have instigated well-judged changes since the previous inspection, rooted in your accurate and comprehensive evaluation of the school's strengths and weaknesses. You and other senior leaders are resolute in your commitment to ensuring that pupils learn well, behave impeccably and enjoy school. To that end, pupils' learning behaviour has improved further, standards of achievement have risen and pupils sing the praises of the variety of interesting and engaging activities on offer. Pupils acquire and develop their skills quickly and make good progress across a range of subjects. This is resulting in maintaining high levels of achievement for pupils.

Standards in the early years have risen steadily in the last three years. Many children start school with skills and understanding typical for their age. Children make typical progress and the proportion who achieve a good level of development is above that seen nationally. Pupils build on this effective start to their schooling and continue to make good progress in reading, writing and mathematics. In key stage 2 in 2015, the proportion of pupils who reached the standards expected for their age was above that seen nationally. In addition, the proportion who achieved

the higher levels was well above that seen nationally in reading and mathematics, and above in writing. Current cohorts are following suit. This is because you are adept at identifying pupils who are at risk of not achieving their full potential. When your concern is sparked, you take appropriate action, ensuring that pupils catch up quickly. For example, last year, you noticed that not all pupils were achieving their full potential in the Year 1 phonics (the sounds that letters represent) check. This year, standards are higher. Unvalidated information indicates that the proportion of pupils on track to meet the national standard has risen. In addition, pupils in Year 2 who did not meet the standard last year have caught up, securing their mastery of early reading skills.

At the time of the previous inspection, leaders were asked to enhance the quality of teaching further. In recent times, and through no fault of your own, there have been a number of changes to the teaching team. Despite this, you have insisted upon standards remaining high, supporting teachers well to improve their skills. The monitoring of teaching and learning is highly effective. You rigorously hold staff to account, ensuring that they receive timely guidance to hone their skills further. You have wisely orchestrated support from others, including a local teaching excellence practitioner. This ensures that all staff, including those at different stages of their careers, are supported well to improve.

At the previous inspection, inspectors also asked the school to accelerate the progress pupils make, particularly in writing. Improving pupils' progress in writing has been the mainstay of the school's work this year. Leaders monitor standards closely, undertaking a variety of activities to satisfy themselves that pupils are acquiring the skills needed for success. Pupils now have more opportunities to write in a range of styles and for different purposes. In some classes, teachers question pupils skilfully and encourage pupils successfully to extend their ideas or choose more adventurous vocabulary. However, there is some inconsistency. Progress slows for some pupils when their first response is accepted at face value and not fully explored.

### **Safeguarding is effective.**

The school's safeguarding policies and procedures meet current requirements. Recording systems are fully in place for the recruitment of staff. Governors are rigorous in ensuring that the necessary checks have been carried out before appointments are made, supporting the headteacher well. Leaders' record-keeping is detailed and completed meticulously. Governors conduct regular checks on practice, assuring themselves that keeping pupils safe is a top priority.

You keep a close eye on every pupil, especially those whose circumstances make them vulnerable. Comprehensive information is gathered, and stringent record-keeping ensures that all concerns are taken seriously. Case files are appropriately organised and explain clearly the actions taken and who is involved. The school works closely with other agencies and services to ensure the safety of pupils.

Pupils who responded to the Ofsted questionnaire and those spoken to during the inspection agree that they feel safe at school. They say that pupils are kind and disagreements are extremely rare. Occasionally, pupils report minor fall-outs, describing these as occasional and only when 'someone has got out of bed the wrong side'. They have high levels of confidence in the adults who care for them, commending adults for resolving issues quickly and effectively. They are confident that bullying does not happen.

### **Inspection findings**

- You display high levels of ambition and are determined that the school continues to improve. School improvement planning is meticulous and considers the right priorities. Supported by the wealth of pupil performance information, you and other leaders check standards, ensuring that all aspects are kept under regular review. As a result, despite changes to staffing, pupils achieve well because any slippage is spotted quickly and then tackled effectively.
- Pupils get off to a flying start in developing their early reading skills. This is because the teaching of reading is very effective and has improved considerably because of changes you have introduced. Teachers make greater use of assessment information so that they identify pupils' needs promptly, and fully address any gaps in pupils' learning. As a result, standards in the Year 1 national check on phonics are rising year on year and pupils now achieve well.
- Leaders have taken time to ensure that the school's new system for assessing pupils without levels is rigorous. Learning from others, you have taken time to consider a variety of approaches, weighing up the advantages and disadvantages of different ways of working. As a result, the system you have settled upon has evolved over the course of the year and is now meeting leaders' and teachers' needs well. However, parents are less sure about their child's progress. This is because efforts to explain the school's approach to parents are less progressive.
- You place high importance on developing teachers' skills effectively. Performance management systems are rigorous and teachers are held robustly to account for the performance of their pupils. Regular lesson observations are sharply focused on helping pupils to learn well. Teachers receive useful support and speak positively about the training opportunities available to them. Support for newly qualified teachers and those who require additional help from time to time is well considered. As a result, leaders have ensured that the teachers' standards are met effectively.
- Recent changes to the leadership of special educational needs are making a difference. The school's special educational needs coordinator knows pupils well and understands their needs. She has made a positive start, overhauling this aspect of the school's provision.

- Pupils benefit from an increasingly wide range of support afforded to them. Staff are receiving helpful training and putting new ways of working into practice. The leader is highly committed to ensuring that pupils who have special educational needs or disability make rapid progress, and go on to achieve as well as their peers. Systems are clearer and parents are appreciative of the high level of communication between school and home. This aspect has improved significantly over the course of the year.
- Disadvantaged pupils make good progress and by the end of key stage 2, achieve as well as their peers and other pupils nationally. However, in key stage 1, disadvantaged pupils make slower progress in mathematics compared with progress in writing or reading. As a result, gaps between disadvantaged pupils and their peers in this aspect are not closing quickly enough.
- Teachers plan interesting and engaging lessons. When deployed effectively, teaching assistants support pupils well, skilfully moving their learning on appropriately. For example, a teaching assistant supported pupils well, skilfully encouraging pupils to consider a variety of adjectives and their meaning when writing a motivational speech. However, occasionally, teaching assistants are not used so effectively and pupils' progress slows.
- Children make good progress in the early years because of high-quality teaching. They are supported effectively, transitioning well and adapting to the more formal approaches expected in Year 1. During the inspection, children practised their handwriting diligently, chanting enthusiastically, 'pencil on the line, every time'. Sessions are characterised by high levels of engagement, determination to do well and prominent enjoyment. Consequently, children are well prepared for Year 1 with the number, writing and reading skills needed for success.
- Parents are highly satisfied with how children settle into life at Edlesborough School. Parents who spoke to the inspector noted the breadth of experiences afforded to their children to help them settle in smoothly. Links between the pre-school and Reception class have strengthened in recent times and children move seamlessly from one phase to another.
- Pupils are polite and well mannered. There are very few incidents of poor behaviour. You have recently reviewed the school's behaviour policy, making appropriate adaptations, as you considered the views of parents, staff, pupils and governors. As a result, there are clear systems that include appropriate rewards and sanctions. In lessons, pupils rise to your expectations, listening attentively and responding appropriately. Pupils say that they are happy in school and feel well looked after by adults.

- Pupils talk animatedly about the range of opportunities afforded to them. They particularly enjoy fund-raising for a variety of charities. They particularly enjoy themed work, such as learning about Africa in Year 3 and Year 4. Pupils in these year groups recall readily tasting African food served up by the school's chef, taking part in tribal dancing and making colourful African masks. Teachers plan memorable and enjoyable experiences for pupils. A wealth of extra-curricular opportunities further enhances the curriculum, ensuring that there is something for everyone. Pupils talk positively about such opportunities, showing eagerness to learn about, explore and appreciate other cultures.
- The school council meets on a weekly basis and is determined to play its part in improving the school. Its members enjoy working alongside leaders and are proud, knowing that they help to make important decisions. In return, leaders are highly receptive to pupils' ideas and contributions. There is a strong sense of working well together.
- Playtimes are managed well because of high levels of adult supervision. The school's expansive grounds are used to full effect, with a range of well-resourced activities on offer. Pupils at lunchtimes enjoy additional sporting activities run by a specialist teacher. As a result, social times are full of energetic, purposeful and harmonious play.
- Leaders ensure that additional sports funding is used to full effect. Pupils participate in a range of activities, such as the popular skipping events during the 'healthy school week'. Threading additional opportunities through the curriculum enhances pupils' enjoyment. For example, pupils in key stage 2 used their writing skills to good effect when writing a motivational speech for Team GB, in readiness for the Olympic Games.
- Pupils' enthusiasm for school is reflected in their good behaviour and attitudes, as well as above-average attendance rates. Pupils are very proud of their school and their achievements.
- Governors offer robust support and challenge and have a marked impact on improving standards. Actively involved in the life of the school, they make themselves readily available to parents at school events. Consequently, they are well informed and contribute well to setting the strategic direction of the school.

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

Leaders and those responsible for governance should ensure that:

- gaps between disadvantaged pupils and their peers close more rapidly in mathematics in key stage 1
- the quality of teachers' questioning improves, so that pupils have more opportunities to explain their reasoning and deepen their understanding, particularly in writing
- parents develop confidence in the school's new assessment system so they know how well their children are progressing

- teaching assistants play an active role in supporting pupils in lessons to achieve high standards.

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. This letter will be published on the Ofsted website.

Yours sincerely

Elizabeth Farr  
**Her Majesty's Inspector**

### **Information about the inspection**

I met with you, other staff with significant responsibilities and three governors, including the chair of the governing body. I spoke to a representative of the local authority by telephone. I also met with six pupils in key stage 2. I also took account of the 39 responses to the pupils' online survey. I observed learning in seven lessons, all jointly with the headteacher, and scrutinised pupils' work. I took account of 72 responses from parents to Ofsted's online questionnaire, Parent View, and one letter received from a parent. I also took account of the views of 16 members of the school team who responded to the online survey for staff. I analysed a range of school documentation, including information about pupils' achievement, the school improvement plan, and safeguarding checks, policies and procedures. We discussed your own evaluation of the school's effectiveness.