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Mr Nick Southgate
Headteacher
Caister Infant, Nursery School and Children's Centre
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Dear Mr Southgate

Short inspection of Caister Infant, Nursery School and Children's Centre

Following my visit to the school on 28 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 the school was judged to be good in May 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 took up your position as headteacher in January 2016. You have brought a wealth of experience to the school. You have wisely taken time to listen to staff, getting to know how the school works and identifying its many strengths before planning changes. You, and your strong leadership team, have worked together well to maintain the school's caring ethos. Also, by carefully drawing on evidence from pupils' books, lesson observations and assessment information, you and your team have been able to see what could be even better. Staff feel that their expertise and knowledge is valued, as reflected in the positive responses from staff questionnaires received during the inspection. As a result, a strong sense of teamwork has been maintained since the last inspection and continues to grow.

Parents are also pleased that the school continues to meet the needs of their children well. The large majority of parents who responded to Ofsted's questionnaire, Parent View, were highly positive about the school. One commented on the 'exceptional support' their child received at the school and another about 'people who genuinely care'. Parents feel that you have continued to make them feel welcome and one commented that the transition from the previous headteacher to your leadership had been 'seamless'.

You have continued to look for ways to help parents to become even more involved with their child's learning; for example, running reading cafes, and inviting parents in to read their child's writing following the 'Big Write.' Consequently, the strong partnership with parents identified in the previous inspection report, continues to grow and flourish.

On the day of the inspection, it was 'move up' day and pupils were spending the morning in their new classes with their new teachers, while Year 2 pupils visited the junior school. It is testament to the good systems and routines established across the school that in all classes there was a calm and settled atmosphere. Pupils were happy and purposeful in their learning, and clearly had been well prepared and so were ready to move up to the next year. This included even the youngest children moving from Nursery into the Reception classes, which they did enthusiastically, enjoying the many interesting activities available for them. You are keen to make all transitions smooth for pupils, including those from school to school. You have taken steps to extend the partnership working with the adjacent junior school. For example, the school held a joint summer fete with the junior school. You are also liaising with the high school, recognising that by working together the schools can improve pupils' experiences and help them settle more quickly.

Pupils enjoy school. This is reflected in better attendance rates, which was an area for improvement identified at the last inspection. Pupils spoken to during the inspection commented that the school was a friendly and welcoming place to be. They also said that their teachers helped them with their learning, and that there is always someone to talk to if they are upset. One pupil proudly announced, 'We don't want to go home.' Pupils said that behaviour at the school is good, and the vast majority of parents agree. Pupils understand the school's 'good to be green' behaviour system. The small number of pupils with behavioural difficulties are managed well. Additional support provided by teaching assistants and teachers in the nurture rooms in the afternoons help develop pupils' social skills. As a result, disruption to learning is rare and good behaviour is the norm in lessons and at playtimes.

There have been a number of changes to the governing body since the last inspection. Some governors are relatively new to their roles, but are keen to fulfil them well. Governors are highly committed to the school and have ensured that, through discussions and visits to the school, they know the school's strengths and where further improvements need to be made. However, governors have not in the past challenged leaders sufficiently about the decisions made about spending, such as the effect of the pupil premium funding on pupils' outcomes. As a result, they have not ensured that the money spent sufficiently improves the achievement of disadvantaged pupils.

Safeguarding is effective.

All staff are highly committed to ensuring that pupils are kept safe at the school. All statutory requirements are met and careful checks are carried out prior to staff starting at the school. Staff receive regular training, the most recent being about the 'Prevent' duty which tackled the issues surrounding the risk of extremism.

Safeguarding is discussed regularly by staff and senior leaders. As a result, staff know what to do if they have a concern about a child's safety so that it is swiftly referred to the appropriate external agency.

Inspection findings

- The previous inspection report identified attendance as an area for improvement. This has been rigorously addressed by leaders, with rewards for good attendance, letters to parents and regular reminders about the importance of good attendance. Panel meetings are held with parents where their child's attendance is causing concern, involving you, your administrator, the school's education welfare officer and other professionals. This has ensured that attendance has risen and is now above the national average. However, leaders are aware that the attendance of some disadvantaged pupils has been lower than others and have increased their efforts to improve attendance of this group, providing support for parents. This is proving successful for many disadvantaged pupils, although there remain a small number whose attendance is too low.
- Since the last inspection, leaders put in place steps to further improve writing so that the high standards achieved in reading and mathematics were also reached in writing. These steps include the introduction of a structured programme to develop spelling and grammar, and the introduction of the 'Big Write'. This has helped to improve writing across the school. The proportion of pupils who achieve higher levels in writing at the end of Year 2 has improved, and standards in writing are above national averages. However, reading and mathematics have improved still further and so there is still a difference between the achievement of pupils in writing compared to reading and mathematics. You and your team recognise that more needs to be done. You have analysed pupil outcomes closely and identified that improving early writing is needed to achieve better outcomes in later years. You also recognise that extending opportunities for writing throughout the school is needed to further improve standards in writing.
- Your senior team and governors have recognised that the achievement of boys in writing has been lower than that of girls. This is one reason why the gap between pupils' achievement in reading and writing has not narrowed. You have identified that this gap begins early on and so have ensured that in the Reception classes, there are more opportunities for early writing which boys will engage with. For older pupils, you have modified topics, so that they are more engaging for boys. This is improving the progress and achievement of boys in Reception with more boys achieving a good level of development, and achievement is also improving in Year 1. However, at the end of Year 2 there remains a large gap between the proportion of boys reaching the expected standard in writing and that of girls.
- You and your team have closely tracked the progress of disadvantaged pupils, recognising that these pupils have not achieved as well as others in the school. Support has been put in place, for example, using additional funding to employ teaching assistant support and providing additional

support groups. This has helped to improve the progress of disadvantaged pupils. As a result, the gap between these pupils and others at the end of the Reception Year and in the Year 1 phonics assessment is narrowing. However, there remains a gap between how well disadvantaged pupils achieve in writing in particular at the end of Year 2. This is because some support provided has been insufficiently focused and so has not had enough effect on improving achievement. In addition, not enough has been put in place to ensure that the most able disadvantaged pupils achieve as well as others in the school.

- Pupils who have special educational needs and/or disabilities make good progress. The leader for special educational needs carefully tracks the progress of each pupil, checking whether additional support is having a positive impact and altering where necessary. Support is provided for different needs; for example, developing pupils' social skills through nurture groups and Forest School activities. As a result, pupils who have special educational needs and/or disabilities make good progress from their starting points.
- Pupils benefit from a broad and interesting curriculum. For example, they enjoy learning about plants and animals and how they grow, about the Queen as part of her 90th birthday celebrations, and about dinosaurs. They are given opportunities to carry out practical tasks such as growing seeds, and to record their observations. The curriculum is enhanced by a good range of clubs including football and Zumba dancing, and by sports activities at lunchtimes. However, achievement in some subjects is not as high as in reading, writing and mathematics. For example, in science achievement is not as high because pupils have too few opportunities to regularly carry out scientific investigations.
- Pupils in the Nursery and Reception classes benefit from the many opportunities to learn outdoors, with a very impressive outdoor space which is well set-up with varied and interesting activities. During the inspection, children were observed hunting for dinosaurs with homemade binoculars, developing their speaking and listening skills during their play and making mud fairy cakes in the mud kitchen exploring textures and measuring. These outdoor learning opportunities allow children to extend their learning in new contexts. Adults intervene appropriately, by asking pertinent questions and extending learning further.

Next steps for the school

Leaders and governors should ensure that they:

- Narrow the gap in achievement in writing between boys and girls, and between disadvantaged pupils and others at the end of Year 2 by ensuring that:
 - funding for disadvantaged pupils is used more strategically
 - pupils are provided with more opportunities to write in a variety of contexts and across all subjects
 - boys who are achieving well act as role models to inspire others
 - governors ask challenging questions to leaders about the effectiveness of

strategies to improve pupils' performance.

- Ensure that the achievement in foundation subjects rises to the same high standard as in reading, writing and mathematics.

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

Yours sincerely

Maria Curry
Her Majesty's Inspector

Information about the inspection

During the inspection, I held meetings with you, your assistant headteacher, one Reception teacher and your leader for special educational needs. I also met with two governors and with a small number of Year 1 pupils. I scrutinised a range of school documents, including information on pupils' progress, safeguarding, school development planning and the school's self-evaluation. I observed teaching in all classes and evaluated pupils' work.