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Ms Ness Peters and Mrs Anna Traxon
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Dear Ms Ness Peters and Mrs Anna Traxon

Short inspection of Newberries Primary School

Following my visit to the school on 15 September 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 October 2011.

This school continues to be good.

The cohesive leadership team has maintained the good quality of education since the previous inspection. You have successfully developed a culture in which leaders at all levels constantly seek to improve the quality of education across the school. Together, you have set a clear direction and have improved the quality of teaching, learning and assessment. You have also been successful in maintaining the harmonious and welcoming atmosphere noted during the previous inspection. Pupils are happy at school and enjoy learning in the school's bright and stimulating classrooms. One pupil commented that we can learn here because 'the teachers here are so supportive'.

Since the previous inspection, there have been several staffing changes, some of which have been temporary. This is something that has been a cause of frustration to a small minority of parents. Governors have taken a thoughtful approach to ensuring that, in an area where teacher recruitment can be very difficult, Newberries Primary School recruits and retains teachers and leaders that have the ability to improve the school. For example, governors have employed two co-headteachers and also re-allocated senior leadership roles to cover for planned absence. This has ensured the continuity of effective leadership. This continuity, and your preparedness to take on board advice from the local authority, has enabled you to bring about improvements following on from key stage 2 outcomes that were not as good as they should have been in 2015, in particular in mathematics.

Pupils explained that behaviour in their lessons is good. Pupils behave well. They are, more often than not, respectful, polite and good-humoured. You put in place effective support for small number of pupils who may need help in making the correct behaviour choices. These pupils respond well to this support as they appreciate the care and attention with which they are treated by the adults. This helps to create a productive ethos in almost all classes, in which very effective learning is able to take place. On the occasions where there is too much chatter it is quickly dealt with by adults. Pupils mix well at break and lunchtimes, happily making use of the many resources available to them in the outside play area. Older pupils are very supportive of their younger peers, one example being the Year 6 pupils who were maturely helping reception children 'find their way' at lunchtime. It is noticeable how confidently and cheerfully pupils interact with each other and adults throughout the school day.

You are skilfully using information about what pupils are able to do to adapt the curriculum and learning activities to meet the changing needs of different pupil cohorts. For example, in 2015, your careful analysis of the specific needs of children in early years enabled you to make the necessary changes to the curriculum and resources. As a consequence of this, and the effective teaching, learning and assessment, a high proportion of children achieved a good level of development. The proportions of pupils achieving the expected level in phonics has risen over the past three years and is considerably higher than the national average. Similarly, inspection evidence indicates that pupils continue to make good progress from their starting points in key stage 1.

You are accurate in your judgement of the quality of teaching, learning and assessment across the school. You carry out frequent, robust monitoring checks which focus sharply on the progress pupils make. You make good use of your information to support and challenge teachers. Evidence seen in pupils' books demonstrates that where you judge that support is necessary, and it is put in place, the quality of teaching, learning and assessment improves quickly. For example, as a result of the teachers applying the techniques they had been helped to develop, pupils in key stage 2 made considerably more progress over time in mathematics.

Most teachers use your accurate assessment information to plan learning activities that are closely matched to the needs of each pupil. While there is consistency and high expectation in key stage 2, you rightly identified that you needed to act swiftly to ensure that the quality of teaching, learning and assessment is consistently as high across key stage 1. A scrutiny of key stage 1 pupils' work indicates that the variation in teachers' expectations of what pupils can achieve in their writing was limiting the achievement of the most able. You are already taking action to correct this by making use of the strategies that have been successful in improving the quality of teaching, learning and assessment elsewhere.

The previous report identified pupils needed greater clarity as to how they should improve their work. You have successfully remedied this. Pupils explained that they value the feedback that they receive from their teachers and understand what they need to do to improve. Evidence in their books supports their views.

Pupils told me that they like coming to school, feel safe and enjoy their learning. Most pupils attend well, and overall absence and persistent absence figures are below the national average. There is a small proportion of pupils who attend less often than they should. Where a pupil's attendance falls, you have been rigorous in following up on absences. The improvement in these pupils' attendance is evidence that you have put in place effective strategies to support them in coming to school.

Safeguarding is effective.

You have ensured that safeguarding is given the highest priority at Newberries Primary School. Pupils feel safe and are safe. They are aware of strategies that they can use to stay safe online and can explain why this is important. Pupils explained that teachers provide them with guidance as to how to act safely in a variety of settings. Pupils can describe what bullying is and explained that this is a rare occurrence at their school. Evidence in school records confirms this to be the case. Pupils outlined that, were bullying to occur, it would be dealt with effectively by adults in the school.

School leaders, including governors, take appropriate action to ensure that all safeguarding arrangements are fit for purpose. Records, including the single central record, are extremely well maintained by the school business manager. Staff are appropriately trained in child protection, including the 'Prevent' duty aimed at raising awareness of the dangers of radicalisation. They understand how to identify any issues and follow up concerns that they may have about the well-being of a pupil in their care. Very high proportions of parents who responded to Parent View agree that their children are safe at school. Parents spoken with on the day of inspection spoke positively about the nurturing, family ethos of the school. This culture of safety and security is helping to build the confidence of pupils to take risks and offer their views in their learning. This is helping to prepare them well for the next stages of their education.

Inspection findings

- You and your subject leaders responded well to the 2015 key stage 2 outcomes that were not good enough, in particular in mathematics. You carefully analysed the reasons for the fall in outcomes, took account the views of pupils and explored best practice in other schools. You also took on board the support of the local authority. The curriculum was appropriately amended, training was provided and, with the support of the governing body, more appropriate resources were purchased. As a result, pupils' progress, including that of the most able, from their individual starting points improved. In 2016, higher proportions of pupils achieved the expected standard in the key stage reading, writing and mathematics assessments than was the case nationally.
- Governance is strong and the governing body is well led, as is its curriculum committee. Governors are ambitious for the school and share the high expectations of the parent community. The governing body takes appropriate steps to ensure that it is well informed about the quality of education within the school, for example by receiving regular presentations from subject leaders and

by making regular visits to the school. Governors are adept at interpreting the assessment information presented to them and skilfully use this knowledge to hold school leaders to account.

- Your careful and frequent analysis of the school's provision has enabled you to identify the correct priorities to ensure that your leaders improve the school further. You have rigorous systems in place to monitor many aspects of the school's work. You are aware that you need to apply the same precise scrutiny of the progress that pupils make in subjects such as English, mathematics and science to every subject.
- In an area where teacher recruitment can be challenging, you have responded to further planned staff absence by reallocating responsibilities across the senior team. Each member of this team has approached their amended roles with enthusiasm and skill. The leadership of early years, key stages 1 and 2 and the provision for pupils who have special education needs and/or disabilities, as well as that of disadvantaged pupils is impressive. These leaders share your joint desire to provide the very best education for the pupils at Newberries Primary School and are working effectively to bring this about. However, the effectiveness of leadership, evident within the school, is less clear to some parents, who expressed their concerns through Parent View, Ofsted's online questionnaire.
- Pupils enter the school with skills and abilities that are at least in line with their peers nationally. You have identified that you need to build upon the good work being carried out to further improve outcomes of the most able pupils. These pupils read with confidence and demonstrate a love of reading, using expression skilfully. At key stage 2, in 2016, all of these pupils achieved the higher standard in mathematics and reading. This was not the case in writing. You know that in a small number of classes the learning activities do not consistently provide opportunities for these pupils to excel in their writing. While one pupil explained that 'teachers push you really hard', another commented that 'I am challenged, but I think I am capable of more.' You are acting quickly to remove any ceilings to achievement for the most able. Evidence seen in school indicates that this is already having a positive impact on these pupils' achievement across the year groups. However, more remains to be done to ensure that teachers consistently provide learning activities that enable the most able pupils to achieve their very best.
- The leadership of the provision for the very small number of disadvantaged pupils is good. The progress that these pupils make is carefully tracked and if any individual pupil needs support, it is quickly put in place. The impact of this support is reviewed frequently and appropriate adjustments are made. Teachers are clearly held to account for the performance of these pupils in the regular pupil progress meetings. As a consequence, disadvantaged pupils make strong progress from their individual starting points. Leaders are aware that the school website does not reflect the recent changes in statutory requirements and have appropriate plans in place to address this in respect of the publication of the school's pupil premium strategy.
- You have made sure that pupils benefit from a carefully developed curriculum. Pupils explained that they enjoy the variety of subjects and learn a great deal from the well-chosen topics, such as the rainforest, ancient Egypt and the Celts. They also appreciate the range of visits that supplement the curriculum, for

example to the Isle of Wight and the Roald Dahl Museum. This helps pupils to develop a wider awareness of life in modern Britain.

- Governors and other school leaders have taken steps to ensure that parents are better informed about the education that their children receive. While the majority of parents appreciate this, the quality of information received remains a concern to a small proportion of parents.

Next steps for the school

Leaders and those responsible for governance should ensure that:

- the improvements already made to the provision for the most able pupils are replicated across all classes.
- leaders in all subjects track the progress that pupils, including the most able, make with the same rigour that is evident in English, mathematics and science; leaders should use this information to ensure that pupils make even better progress from their individual starting points
- the school's systems for communicating with parents are reviewed and appropriate amendments made so that parents receive sufficient valuable information about the work of the school.
- the school website meets the most recent requirements.

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

Yours sincerely

John Lucas
Her Majesty's Inspector

Information about the inspection

During the inspection, meetings were held with you, other senior leaders, five subject leaders, five governors and 12 pupils. I also held a telephone discussion with a representative from the local authority. Together with you, I visited every class to observe pupils at work. I also spoke with pupils during a walk of the site at lunchtime. I reviewed a range of school documents including the school's self-evaluation, development plan, and information relating to safeguarding, pupils' progress, attendance and behaviour. I also evaluated the school's website and found it not to be compliant. I took account of the views of parents who responded to Parent View, along with those expressed in email correspondence received on the day of the inspection and in discussions held with parents at the beginning of the school day.