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Mrs Julie Sandford
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Dear Mrs Sandford

Short inspection of Colman Junior School

Following my visit to the school on 30 November 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 leadership team has maintained the good quality of education in the school since the previous inspection. You became headteacher in 2013 and since then have provided very effective leadership. You have ensured that staff raise their expectations of pupils' achievement and created a shared vision for the school. You have set out clearly your expectations of senior leaders and supported them in developing their skills. As a result, senior leaders work together as a strong team. They fulfil their responsibilities well and provide good support for you in raising standards.

You have provided training for teachers and teaching assistants, so that they understand how to be more effective. Staff speak highly of the support that you provide, and all staff who responded to the Ofsted online questionnaire said that they are treated with respect and enjoy working at the school. As a result of the support you have provided, teaching is good and pupils are making good progress across the school.

You have ensured that inclusion and promoting equality are central to the work of this school, where pupils come from many different backgrounds. Pupils spoke with confidence about how welcoming the school is of people from different backgrounds, faiths and cultures. Pupils said to me 'we are all different but all important'. Displays around the school, such as the one identifying the many

languages spoken by pupils, celebrate the school's diversity. Experiences, such as Japanese club, further widen pupils' understanding of other languages and cultures.

Parents spoken to in the playground, and those who responded to the Ofsted online questionnaire Parent View, also said that staff are very welcoming towards them.

Pupils who are deaf are seamlessly included within the school. For example, signing is part of every assembly, often with pupils at the front modelling the signs for others to join in.

Pupils who speak English as an additional language are supported well and welcomed as part of the 'Colman family'. One pupil who had arrived at the school speaking no English told me that staff and pupils could not have been more welcoming, and helped him to settle so that he quickly learned English.

The governing body provides good support for you. Governors know the school is led well but are still confident to challenge you to justify decisions taken. For example, governors questioned the rationale for the changes made to the school's prospectus to check that this would provide value for money. Governors have questioned you closely about the dip in performance in mathematics in Year 6 in 2016, and have satisfied themselves that strategies have been put in place to ensure improvements this year. They have discussed in detail the progress that pupils make between the end of Year 2 in the Infant school and the end of Year 6. They have identified with you that there needs to be better liaison between the two schools and a more consistent approach to assessing pupils' work and progress. Governors supported you in moving some very strong teachers into Years 3 and 4 so that pupils do not lose ground in their progress in these years. This is proving effective in ensuring consistently good progress across the school.

Governors take a sensible and measured approach to evaluating the impact of actions taken. They know that some actions will secure rapid and immediate improvements, such as changes to the school environment and the development of the new library to promote reading. They know that other actions take longer to demonstrate positive impact, such as the introduction of a whole-school approach to the teaching of writing, which is now showing a significant positive impact on pupils' work.

Many parents spoke about the varied and interesting opportunities for learning provided, which enthuse their children and ensure they want to attend school. Parents' comments included 'adults really go the extra mile' and 'Colman school makes every child feel valued.' Parents are given lots of information about their children's learning. Pupils carry out home learning tasks talking about stories with their parents, prior to tackling their writing tasks. Parents are regularly invited to events such as a recent meeting explaining how to help their children with reading, and another related to developing children's self-esteem. The school's parent support adviser also works with parents to help them when there are difficulties and problems which may impact on pupils' learning. Consequently, parents are highly supportive of the school and pleased to send their children to Colman Junior School.

Pupils are well cared for and nurtured at school, but are also provided with appropriate challenge. Because of this, they enjoy their learning and behave very well in the vast majority of classes. They are polite and courteous, for example regularly saying 'good morning' and holding open doors for adults. They demonstrate the school's values in how they treat each other and adults in school. They enjoy responsibilities, such as being part of the 'Friendship Squad' who help other pupils at lunchtimes. Pupils are thoughtful and reflective. One pupil spoke about moral dilemma scenarios that they had been considering in a lesson. He commented that 'when you see how someone else responds, you find out who they really are'. Pupils learn about being a good citizen and about British values, for example through assemblies about democracy, and understand how this is relevant to their lives now and in the future.

Safeguarding is effective.

Keeping pupils safe has a high priority at Colman Junior School. You make sure that checks on staff are carried out rigorously and the governor with responsibility for safeguarding regularly checks that all statutory procedures are followed. You ensure that all staff training is up to date so that staff know what signs to look out for that may cause concern. This is evident in the concerns forms that you have on file. These show, for example, that staff are aware of the risks posed by radicalisation and extremism, and what signs indicate that pupils may be suffering from neglect. Pupils' files are well maintained, with clear chronologies, so that the sequence of concerns and actions taken in response is clearly evident. These files demonstrate that you act swiftly on any concerns that are raised and continue to follow up with external agencies until you are sure that a child is not in danger.

Inspection findings

- The previous inspection report identified the need to improve pupils' writing. You have successfully addressed this so that the quality of pupils' writing is now good across the school. You have provided training for staff in how to help pupils with their writing. You have introduced better systems for checking the progress that pupils are making in writing. Teachers regularly look at pupils' writing together so that they reach agreement about the standard of work, and whether it meets the expected standard for each year group.
- You have thought about how best to provide feedback to pupils about how to improve their work and improved practice in this area. Teachers make appropriate comments to pupils, and time is given for pupils to respond to comments in line with your school policy. However, you have also been careful to ensure that marking systems are manageable for staff and helpful to pupils.
- You have introduced a whole-school approach to writing so that pupils are regularly given the opportunity to demonstrate their skills in an extended piece of writing. You have improved the opportunities for writing across the curriculum. When reviewing your curriculum, you have ensured that the topics being taught are centred on English texts so that pupils practise their writing skills when

learning other subjects, such as history and science. Consequently, pupils' writing in other subjects is good in the majority of classes and pupils make good progress in writing.

- You have raised the profile of reading in school. Your new library, central to the school, is well used by pupils who enjoy selecting their next book from the good range on offer. Pupils enjoy reading because you have promoted reading for pleasure, for example through the visits to the school of a number of well-known authors. You have changed the way reading is taught. This has included providing focused teaching of phonics for pupils who join in Year 3 with weaker skills. Class reading lessons develop pupils' comprehension skills well; for example, during the inspection, pupils in Year 6 were reading 'A Christmas Carol'. They were then exploring the character of Scrooge at different points in his life, drawing on evidence from the text to justify their comments. Tasks such as these are helping pupils, already competent in decoding words, to develop more sophisticated reading skills such as inference and deduction, and provide a good level of challenge for the most able readers.
- Despite the improvements made to the teaching of reading, you recognise that in 2016 the proportion of pupils who reached the expected standard in reading at the end of Year 6 was slightly below average. This is partly attributable to a number of pupils who joined Year 6 within a few months of the tests and who were at an early stage of learning English. However, you also recognise that some competent readers did not reach the expected standard and you have carefully analysed the reasons for this. You have identified that some pupils need to work at a better pace in answering comprehension questions and to move on more swiftly if a question is too tricky. Teachers are addressing this with pupils during their reading lessons. The most recent assessments of pupils in Year 6 show that a good proportion of pupils are already working at the standard expected by the end of Year 6. In other year groups the teaching of reading is also good. Teachers extend pupils' vocabulary, for example by reading stories to pupils regularly and by using glossaries identifying key subject-specific vocabulary at the beginning of topics. As a result, pupils develop good reading skills and are making good progress in reading.
- You have rightly identified that mathematics teaching was not as effective as teaching in English. Along with other senior leaders, you have analysed pupils' work in this subject closely and identified that pupils' skills in reasoning and problem solving were not strong enough. You have already drawn up a plan to address this and begun to implement training for teachers on how to improve teaching in these areas. You have tasked one of your senior leaders with leading mathematics across the school to ensure that improvements are driven forward swiftly. This is already having a positive impact. In pupils' books, I saw examples of them successfully grappling with mathematical problems and recording what they had found out from investigations, justifying their views. You have introduced new methods for checking pupils' progress so that teachers have better information to use when planning their lessons. However, you recognise that it is too early to judge the impact of many of the changes introduced.
- Leaders look carefully at the progress of pupils in each year group, through to progress at an individual pupil level. You ensure that any underachievement is identified and discussed with staff during the regular pupil progress meetings.

You check that those who are capable of more rapid progress are achieving well and that additional support is provided for those who require it, so that they make up lost ground. As a result, pupils' individual needs are well met. The most able pupils are catered for well. For example, in mathematics, additional challenges are provided for the most able pupils where they apply their learning in different contexts.

- Pupils who are disadvantaged are making good progress in school because leaders carefully consider their individual barriers to learning and put in place appropriate support. Pupils' emotional and pastoral needs are well catered for, as are their academic needs. The school's pastoral support worker ensures that those pupils who need additional support receive it and so are enabled to make good progress in their learning.
- A significant proportion of pupils in last year's Year 6 who were disadvantaged also had special educational needs and/or disabilities. The pupils did not achieve as well as others because of their individual needs.
- The most able disadvantaged pupils are provided with extra support to ensure that they make the rapid progress of which they are capable. Consequently, many of the most able disadvantaged pupils make better than expected progress.
- Typically, the majority of pupils who have special educational needs and/or disabilities make good progress from their starting points. Leaders identify these pupils' needs with precision, and so are able to provide exactly the correct support for each pupil. Leaders ensure that teachers and those adults providing additional support work together to share information so that everyone knows what each pupil needs to learn next.
- Pupils who speak English as an additional language make good progress because they are well supported. Pupils are assessed when they join the school so that their skills and needs are accurately identified. Training is provided for staff so that pupils are supported within classes, as well as receiving additional support when needed. Leaders are very conscious of the need to ensure that pupils who speak English as an additional language develop the ability not only to converse confidently, but also to learn the more specialised vocabulary that they may not encounter every day, but which they will need in different subjects as they progress through the school and on to high school.
- The curriculum is interesting and vibrant, and much praised by pupils and their parents, one of whom said 'There is something exciting for my child to look forward to every week.' A pupil also stated, 'Our teachers really take account of what we enjoy.' Leaders have put in place a curriculum where topics are well planned and so develop pupils' learning in different subjects well. For example, pupils have regular opportunities to carry out science investigations such as 'The Freaky Hand investigation' and to consider what makes a fair test. They learn the skills of historical enquiry, for example considering the positive and negative impact of changes during the industrial revolution. In most classes, pupils' work in subjects other than English and mathematics is of a good standard and pupils make good progress. However, in some classes, pupils' progress in subjects such as history and geography is not as strong because teachers' expectations are not high enough.

Next steps for the school

Leaders and those responsible for governance should ensure that:

- improvements put in place to the teaching of mathematics become firmly embedded so that standards at the end of Year 6 rise
- pupils make equally good progress in subjects other than English and mathematics in all classes.

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, meetings were held with you and the school's senior leaders. I met with the chair of the governing body and with a small number of pupils from Year 5 and Year 6. I heard a sample of pupils read from Year 3 and Year 6. I scrutinised a range of documents, including information on pupils' progress, safeguarding, development planning and the school's self-evaluation. I visited classes and evaluated pupils' work. I evaluated the school's website and found it to meet requirements on the publication of specified information.

I focused particularly on how well leaders had addressed the previous inspection issue to improve pupils' writing; on how well pupils' individual needs are met; and on the quality and breadth of the wider curriculum, and its impact on pupils' progress.