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Lindsey Boucher
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Dear Mrs Boucher

Short inspection of Coates Primary School

Following my visit to the school on 6 December 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 September 2011.

This school continues to be good.

The leadership team has maintained the good quality of education in the school since the last inspection. You provide the school with purposeful, effective leadership. You have successfully established a clear, embedded vision of high expectations and continual improvement. You, the governors and staff work together as a strong, cohesive team and take great pride in working at the school.

Staff feel that you encourage, challenge and support them to improve continually. They are very positive about your leadership and feel that the school has improved since the previous inspection. They are proud to be members of the staff team. This reflects your relentless commitment to ensuring that everyone, adults and pupils alike, are helped and encouraged to achieve their very best.

Underpinning everything you all do is the determination to do the very best for every child, no matter what their need or ability. As a result of this commendable attitude, pupils are happy, confident, achieving well, and also have a great deal of pride in their school. Parents concur with this view. This is summed up well by one parent, who said: 'The staff are dedicated, hard-working and approachable. They are completely focused on getting the best out of all the children, and children love their school.'

You have been working hard to implement the national changes to the curriculum

while always ensuring that the provision you put in place is individualised for your pupils. Your assessment system for all curriculum subjects is well understood and applied by staff. Consequently, there is a consistent approach to how teachers record pupil progress and set aspirational targets that pupils work towards. Leaders and staff keep a close eye on the progress of individual pupils. You are not complacent and constantly review the way that you use assessment information to best secure better outcomes for pupils. This is ensuring that pupils' progress, from their various starting points, is measured precisely, and their individual needs, or any risk of underachievement, are identified, and action taken swiftly.

You have ensured that the teaching, and provision of the curriculum, is a strength, and this contributes significantly to pupils' success in applying their reading, writing and mathematics skills well. Pupils are provided with a range of opportunities both in and outside of the curriculum so they leave school as confident, positive, self-assured young people, ready for the next stage of their learning.

Teachers provide appropriate, constructive feedback that enables pupils to reflect upon their work and improve. Pupils know how important it is to check their own work and, as they progress through school, they develop independent strategies to successfully achieve this. Pupils' pride in their work is seen in the high standard of handwriting and presentation in all their books, and the displays around the school.

You have effectively worked on the recommended areas for improvement identified at the previous inspection. Teaching is consistently good or better over time. Teachers provide pupils with exciting stimulus and more challenge so that they make better progress from their starting points. Pupils also have many opportunities to learn about other cultures and beliefs. Pupils have a sound understanding of British values and how they live these out in their day-to-day lives. For example, one young pupil explained how they have been learning about respect and tolerance in class and during assemblies, and also demonstrated her understanding of democracy, saying: 'It is like when we have a vote about what movie we watch on film night'.

The outdoor area in the early years has been developed since the previous inspection. Children are given more chances to use their writing and number skills in independent, creative activities outside, to supplement the focused writing and number work they do with adults. This is contributing to a larger proportion of children achieving a good level of development by the end of the Reception Year. You acknowledge though that further work is needed to secure even better provision for the younger children in the early years.

Pupils' positive attitudes to learning are a verification of your school's success. You and the staff have high aspirations for all the pupils and share this with them in your expectations of what they will achieve. During the inspection there were many examples of pupils sharing their enjoyment about their learning, the pride they have in their achievements and the high level of discussion they have about their work. For example, during a meeting with pupils, one insightful younger pupil said, 'I love trying new things, it makes me feel excited about what I am doing.' Also, while in a

Year 6 class, three pupils had a discussion about solving a mathematics question about fractions, exploring remainders, division and multiplication very competently. One pupil said, 'Well, if we know that half is 46, then we will need to work out what 1 is, then what 10 is, and multiply it.' All pupils spoken to were overwhelmingly proud of their work and rightly so. Pupils mirror the high expectations that you and your staff insist upon. Inspection evidence shows that pupils too set themselves high standards, and as a result, they are consistently achieving well and are a credit to the school.

Older pupils provide exemplary role models for younger pupils to aspire to. While talking to pupils, younger pupils were very complimentary about their older peers. One Year 2 pupil said, 'We get a lot of help from Years 5 and 6, who look after us when we might feel lonely or sad. They are always there to care for us.'

Safeguarding is effective.

You and the governing body have ensured that there is an embedded culture and ethos of safeguarding in the school. You and the school business manager meticulously ensure that all statutory checks are made to make sure that adults are suitable to work with children. All training, including identifying any form of abuse, radicalisation and extremism, is up to date. All policies in place reflect the latest statutory guidance. Inspection evidence, and speaking to staff, show that these are followed unflinchingly.

All staff understand their responsibility for the safety of pupils. They take it seriously and follow procedures precisely. You appropriately draw upon the support of external agencies in a timely manner when and where needed. This supports you effectively in your work as designated lead, and ensures that all pupils are well looked after and safe.

Pupils are taught how to stay safe. Pupils' books show that they complete work on 'stranger danger'. Pupils also think about who they could go to if they need help, being able to say no if they are not happy doing something, and how to deal with bullying. These opportunities ensure that they make the right choices, and have a good understanding of the consequences of their actions.

Parents are very positive about the school's work. They all said that they think their children are cared for and safe. One parent spoke for all, saying, 'It's a school where you have no worries when you drop your child off because you know they will be safe, and looked after as if they were the teacher's own child.'

Inspection findings

- Pupils progress well from their various starting points. At the end of key stages 1 and 2, pupils attain at least the same as other pupils nationally in reading, writing and mathematics, and sometimes pupils achieve above the national averages.
- You have an astute view of the strengths and weaknesses in the school's provision. Careful, rigorous analysis of the school's work means that you are very

aware of the school's strengths, and identify accurately the areas to develop. The school's development plan is precise and realistic. It sets clear timescales and measurable targets so that close checks can be made on the progress you are making against your intentions and aims.

- Governors have a secure knowledge and understanding of the school's improvement journey. Governors, including those who are new, provide effective challenge and check the school's work using the jointly written school development plan as a focus for improvement. With your guidance, governors make shrewd financial decisions to ensure that additional funding, such as the pupil premium, is spent effectively to provide individualised support for disadvantaged pupils. As a result, disadvantaged pupils' progress is improving, and their attainment is showing that the differences between them and non-disadvantaged pupils nationally are diminishing.
- You provide staff with appropriate opportunities for professional development. This not only supports them to improve their teaching, but is also ensuring that they play an integral part in contributing to school improvement and the development of the school's provision. Consequently, teachers, including those new to the profession, have been flexible in adapting to the national changes and raised expectations you insist upon, to support you to improve the school further.
- Pupils' targets are aspirational. Pupils talk keenly about what they need to do next to achieve more. For example, one pupil showed a full understanding of the 'passport to progress' they have in their writing and said, 'On this I have my targets for writing and I am trying hard to make sure I can say I have achieved this by Christmas.' When asked if the other targets already achieved have now been forgotten, the pupil responded adamantly: 'Oh no, I now just do those things without thinking, so for example, checking my work so it makes sense, I just do that now, it's like a habit and I just do it. It means my writing is better than it was when I first started in Year 6.'
- The school is working well to further develop pupils' reading skills. The proportion of Year 1 pupils achieving the expected standard in the phonics screening check has improved over time. In 2016, outcomes were above the national average. The most able readers read with fluency and feeling, dealing with more difficult books capably. All pupils who were asked said that they read regularly at home, as well as in school, and enjoy reading. The pupils commented positively about the reading areas in their classrooms as places they could sit in and read quietly.
- Scrutiny of science books shows clear evidence of effective science teaching over time. The science teaching is characterised by a precise use of relevant technical vocabulary, and the many opportunities pupils receive to apply investigation skills. Consequently, pupils show that they have a sound understanding of the key concepts they are covering, and additionally, science is a subject area all pupils who were spoken to said they enjoyed.
- Pupils who have special educational needs and/or disabilities make good progress from their starting points, and over time this is improving further. This is as a result of careful, accurate identification of their needs. Leaders regularly check the work these pupils do to make sure the bespoke support is making a difference to how well they are doing. Leaders ensure that the support helps them to make better progress and subsequently achieve well from their differing starting points.

- The lessons that teachers plan, and teachers' skilful use of questioning, ensure that there are increasing opportunities to develop pupils' thinking and learning. However, not enough most-able pupils are reaching the high standard by the end of Year 6 because they are not given enough independent opportunity to broaden, deepen and apply their skills.
- More children are leaving the Reception Year having achieved a good level of development, despite a high proportion of children entering Reception Year with skills lower than is typical for children of the same age nationally. This is as a result of the focus you have placed on improving the environment, and the children's access to a variety of activities that helps them apply their basic skills in a range of situations. You identify that this remains an area to continue to focus on, ensuring that leaders receive training that will further enhance the provision for the combined pre-school and Reception children.
- As headteacher, you take on much of the school's work, and this has resulted in you obtaining a very secure, evaluative oversight of the school. You are an inspirational role model for leaders and you have been instrumental in their development and increasing their capacity. However, some leaders are newer to their role and have not had the time and opportunity to demonstrate their effectiveness as much in their current role.
- You value the support you receive, and the professional dialogue you engage in with the local authority. You work effectively with the improvement adviser to reflect upon and evaluate the school's current position. You discuss what will help the school take the next steps in its improvement journey. While taking on board all support offered, you ensure that all the decisions you make are what is best for pupils at Coates Primary School.

Next steps for the school

Leaders and those responsible for governance should ensure that:

- as the school improves further, the leadership structure is developed and sustained so that the headteacher continues to receive appropriate and equal support from all leaders
- they build on the positive successes so far and secure further, consistent improvements in teaching and learning
- most-able pupils are given more independent opportunities to demonstrate their breadth and depth of knowledge and understanding so that they achieve the higher standard in reading, writing and mathematics that they demonstrate they are capable of.

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

Yours sincerely

Tracy Fielding
Her Majesty's Inspector

Information about the inspection

During the inspection, I met with you, the early years leader and the key stage 1 and 2 leader. I also met with four governors, including the chair of the governing body. I spoke on the telephone to a representative from the local authority who provides support to the school. I listened to pupils read and spoke with two groups of pupils about their school experience. You and I visited all classes and scrutinised pupils' workbooks. In addition, I analysed the school's safeguarding arrangements, including the single central register (the school's record of safeguarding recruitment checks on staff). I evaluated the school's documentation in relation to pupils' performance, improvement planning, attendance, governing body meetings and monitoring records. I took account of 20 responses to Parent View, Ofsted's online survey, the 18 responses to the Ofsted free-text service and 13 responses to the staff survey. There were no responses from pupils to Ofsted's online survey.

This inspection focused on:

- how well leaders, including governors, are sustaining their level of work so that the school continues to improve
- how leaders have secured improvement in teaching and learning so that it is consistently good or better
- how groups of pupils are being supported to do as well as they can, including disadvantaged pupils, pupils who have special educational needs and/or disabilities, and those who need to catch up
- evaluating how the early years has improved since the previous inspection, particularly developing the outdoor area and extending children's opportunities to access a creative curriculum
- how well leaders are ensuring that pupils gain a full understanding of modern Britain and the diverse society we live in.