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Mr Stuart Mansell
Headteacher
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Dear Mr Mansell

Short inspection of Nene Valley Primary School

Following my visit to the school on 14 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 October 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 and your deputy headteacher work well together to ensure that pupils receive a strong education through a well-designed curriculum. You continue to maintain your clear vision to develop each child's full potential, personally and academically.

Pupils told me how much they enjoy and are proud of their school. This is very evident as attendance continues to be strong. Pupils rarely miss a day. Almost all parents who commented through the online free text service stated that they feel welcomed and recognise that their children are 'the main priority' for school leaders. All parents who responded to Ofsted's online questionnaire, Parent View, would recommend the school.

Pupils are extremely polite and well mannered. Their conduct around the school is exemplary. Pupils are proud of their environment and relationships with each other are for the most part very positive. Consequently, learning in lessons proceeds without interruption and friendships are evident.

You provide a well-organised and inviting environment in which pupils' diversity is displayed and celebrated. You ensure that those with an enhanced talent, for example in art, are provided with additional opportunities to further their skills. The art work around the school is of a very high quality and demonstrates the value you place on providing a rich and varied curriculum. The many different languages that are spoken at your school are celebrated through 'the language of the month'. As a result, pupils are happy and learn well.

Your provision for pupils who have special educational needs and/or disabilities is strong. These pupils make good progress from their starting points due to the individual attention they receive. You are rightly pleased that the small numbers of disadvantaged pupils also make good progress, with some of them now achieving above that expected for their age in English and mathematics.

Since the previous inspection, you have continued to improve the quality of teaching and learning, particularly in mathematics. In 2016, the proportion of pupils who reached the expected standard by the end of key stage 2 was above that found nationally. This was the same picture for the key stage 1 pupils. At key stage 1, the proportion of most-able pupils who were working at greater depth in mathematics was above the national average in 2016.

As a consequence of pupils' outcomes from 2016, you have wasted no time in further raising everyone's expectations of what the most-able pupils can achieve. Staff provide learning activities more frequently where these pupils can demonstrate their knowledge skills and understanding, and excel in reading, writing and mathematics.

Subject leaders regularly monitor the impact of staff training and how well the most able pupils are achieving in every year group. You provide additional support for both staff and pupils where necessary so that more of these pupils can reach the higher standards expected.

Safeguarding is effective.

School leaders, including governors, place the highest priority on keeping pupils safe and providing strong pastoral care for pupils at Nene Valley Primary School. Leaders have been successful in creating a safe and caring environment in which pupils and staff have confidence and feel valued. All parents who responded to Parent View agreed that their children are safe and happy. One comment made by a parent summed up the many positive comments received: 'It is clear that the school really values each and every child they are caring for.'

The school's safeguarding policies and procedures meet current requirements. Recording systems are fully in place for the recruitment of staff. Leaders and governors are rigorous in ensuring that the necessary recruitment checks have been carried out effectively. Documents and school records are meticulously kept.

Leaders ensure that staff are well informed and trained about new safeguarding guidance including, for example, the government's 'Prevent' duty to counter radicalisation. Staff receive regular training both formally and through regular staff updates, and are suitably qualified and confident to implement the school's policies. Staff ensure that risk assessments are thorough when taking pupils on school trips.

Pupils who spoke to me during the inspection said that they feel safe. They have someone to talk to if they are concerned. Parents overwhelmingly agreed that their children are kept safe in the school. Pupils are very confident that the adults will deal well with conflict or any potential bullying situations should they ever arise. Pupils are adamant that bullying does not occur at the school because they are taught how to keep themselves safe. Pupils' books show that they learn about keeping safe online regularly during lessons. Older pupils appreciate their roles and responsibilities to help pupils learn about respecting others through the mini-mentor system that is in place.

Inspection findings

- As an experienced headteacher, you are ably supported by a skilled deputy headteacher. Together, you lead the school well. You have set clear priorities to continue to improve the school. You have ensured that staff changes and times of planned absences have not disrupted the learning opportunities for pupils. Pupils leave Nene Valley Primary School in Year 6 having reached standards in reading, writing and mathematics that are at least in line with, and often better, than other pupils nationally.
- Since the previous inspection, you have continued to ensure that the strengths identified remain. You have ensured that the areas identified for improvement have been a focus of school improvement each year. You continue to raise the quality of teaching and learning in mathematics. During this inspection, a group of Year 1 pupils were enjoying their shape hunt around the school. One pupil proudly and correctly explained 'I am sitting on a cuboid' as she sat on one of the cushions around the school. These pupils were confident with their reasoning and mathematical explanations of the properties of shape.
- In 2016, the proportion of pupils at key stage 2 who reached the higher standard in mathematics was below that found nationally. Under the previous accountability measure, over half the pupils left the school in 2015 with a Level 5 or above. One of the strengths of leadership is how well leaders respond when faced with challenges. From a scrutiny of pupils' books, it is clear that the most able pupils are now provided with many more opportunities to deepen and extend their mathematical skills than in the past. In lessons seen, some most-able pupils were discussing how to complete magic squares. Even though they found the activity challenging, they persevered, used well-chosen resources to help them and showed their determination to succeed.

- You are aware that currently the same expectation of the most-able pupils in mathematics is not replicated in other subjects such as science and, at times, reading lessons. In pupils' guided reading books, the most able pupils are not provided with sufficiently challenging and probing questions so that they develop a deeper understanding of the texts that are being read.
- The link between reading and writing for the most able pupils is evident. Inspection evidence shows that in a few year groups, the most able pupils do not make rapid progress in their writing. This is because, in these classes, the most able pupils receive fewer opportunities to use and apply higher-level skills in subjects other than English and mathematics, so that they can excel and reach the high standards of which they are capable.
- In science, you have already started to improve the experience that pupils receive and raise the expectations of adults about what pupils can achieve. Although too early to judge, pupils in Year 6 told me how much better their science learning is and that they enjoy the many opportunities to develop their scientific skills, knowledge and understanding through the practical experiments. However, science books for younger pupils demonstrate that they complete the same worksheets, irrespective of ability. Consequently, for some of the younger pupils the work is too easy and for others too hard.
- In subjects such as history and geography, pupils have many opportunities to practise their literacy skills. The many additional trips and experiences you provide as a school bring subjects to life. Recently, the older pupils visited Bletchley Park to enhance their understanding of life during the war. The work they produced in their writing following the visit was of a very high standard. Pupils' presentation in topic books is of the same good standard as in English and mathematics.
- Although at an early stage, your strategy to improve the assessment system used by the school is well under way. This new system is designed to enable you to accurately measure the smaller steps of progress that pupils who have special educational needs and/or disabilities make in reading, writing and mathematics. You know these pupils currently on roll are making strong progress from their individual starting points because they receive individual support that is tailored to their needs. A few parents commented, using the Ofsted free text service, about the timely support their children who have additional needs have received, and the positive personal and academic impact of this.
- In changing the assessment system, you have recognised that the targets set for key stage 1 pupils in writing are not high enough. This is particularly so for those disadvantaged pupils who are currently working at the expected standard for their age. You and other leaders are now revising the targets so that the progress these pupils make is at least linked to their achievement in the early years and ensures that they make accelerated progress.

- Since the previous inspection, governors have been through a period of change. Recently, some new parent governors have joined the governing body and are quickly adapting to their new role. Governors promote the 'success for all' ethos and understand the strengths and areas of weakness at the school. Evidence from the minutes of meetings demonstrates that governors regularly ask questions of school leaders. However, not all governors check the information well enough around the targets and progress that pupils make so that they can provide further strategic direction.

Next steps for the school

Leaders and governors should ensure that:

- adults improve the teaching of reading to the most able pupils, so that these pupils have more opportunity to deepen their skills and understanding
- adults use assessment information even more precisely to plan learning that accelerates pupils' progress further in key stage 1
- middle leaders ensure that the teaching of science meets the needs of all groups of pupils more precisely so that younger pupils securely develop their scientific skills
- governors sharpen their focus on the progress that pupils make from the early years to the end of key stage 1 so that they hold school leaders even further to account for the progress groups of pupils make.

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

Yours sincerely

Kim Hall
Her Majesty's Inspector

Information about the inspection

During the inspection, I met with you, your deputy headteacher and members of the governing body, including the chair of the governing body.

On the day of inspection, several classes were taking part in school trips. I visited all classes that were available where I observed pupils learning and talked to them about their work and school. In lessons, I looked at pupils' work in books to establish the quality of learning over time. Together we scrutinised pupils' work in a wide range of subjects so that I could determine the quality of learning across the curriculum.

I spent time speaking informally with pupils in class and at lunchtime. I reviewed the school's documents about safeguarding, including the record of checks on the suitability of each member of staff to work with young people, pupils' attendance and the school's own review of its performance and priorities for improvement.

There were 53 responses to Parent View that were considered, including 28 free text responses.

The key foci for this inspection were:

- how well are leaders and managers keeping pupils safe and sustaining good or better behaviour?
- how well have leaders and managers raised the quality of teaching in mathematics since the previous inspection?
- how effective are leaders and managers in ensuring that the most able pupils are making good progress?
- how well do leaders and managers ensure that disadvantaged pupils and those who have special educational needs and/or disabilities make good progress from their starting points?
- what is the quality of the curriculum in subjects other than English and mathematics?