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Mrs Carolyn Doherty
Headteacher
Ramridge Primary School
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Dear Mrs Doherty

Short inspection of Ramridge Primary School

Following my visit to the school on 7 March 2017, 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 June 2013.

This school continues to be good.

The leadership team has maintained the good quality of education in the school since the last inspection. The school has had significant changes in governance since its previous inspection, with a number of new governors joining the board, including a new chair of governors. You have invested effectively in the recruitment and training of new staff, and strengthened your senior leadership team. These changes have assisted you in your drive to secure high-quality teaching across the school.

You bring a calm, strategic and confident approach to your work, which parents, staff and governors all recognise and appreciate. Parents who I spoke to informally at the start of the day were full of praise for the school. Typical of the comments made were, 'This is a fantastic school, the staff are quick to act on any concerns,' and, 'I am so proud that my children come to this school; they are safe and happy here.'

Pupils behave exceptionally well in lessons and around the school, showing respect and courtesy to staff and visitors and concentrating hard when they are working. Pupils enjoy their lessons because teachers make learning interesting and ensure that pupils understand how to succeed in their work. The vast majority of pupils attend school regularly and arrive punctually and eager to start their day. The breakfast club and after-school childcare are well organised, with lots of activities such as table tennis and construction games which pupils thoroughly enjoy.

You are extremely well supported by your deputy and together you provide strong leadership and a clear vision for school development. Handwriting has improved considerably since the previous inspection and teaching is now stronger. You are fully aware of the areas which still need to be improved. You are working hard to ensure that pupils do better in phonics, so that recent variations in annual screening check results are eliminated. Your strong focus on pupils' writing is also appropriate and you recognise that more pupils, including disadvantaged pupils, should be writing at greater depth, especially in key stage 2. This work needs to continue. You have a comprehensive and detailed plan for continuing to improve the school, which you review regularly.

Safeguarding is effective.

You have ensured that all safeguarding arrangements are fit for purpose and procedures to recruit new staff are rigorous. Records are detailed and of high quality.

Your safeguarding leader is an exemplary practitioner. She is extremely well informed about safeguarding requirements and she provides comprehensive advice to colleagues, leaders and governors. As a result, staff are very well trained, and understand their roles and responsibilities. They are vigilant and quick to respond to any potential risk. All the required safeguarding checks are in place and child protection records are comprehensive, securely maintained and well organised. The pupils I spoke to told me that they feel safe at school. They consider bullying and bad behaviour to be rare events and they are confident that adults will listen to them if they have concerns. Helping pupils to keep themselves safe is woven through the curriculum. For example, the ongoing safer internet work reminds pupils about how to stay safe online, and pupils talked knowledgeably to me about what they had learned.

Parents' views are equally positive. An overwhelming majority agree that pupils are safe and well cared for at Ramridge Primary.

Inspection findings

- To ascertain that the school remained good, one of my key lines of enquiry was about English. This was because in 2016 no pupils at the end of key stage 2 achieved greater depth in writing. Equally, recent results from the Year 1 phonics screening check have varied considerably, fluctuating from 57% in 2014 to 72% in 2015 and back down to 56% in 2016. You agreed, and told me that your leadership team had already identified this as a key priority for the school.
- When we observed phonics teaching across key stage 1, we saw examples of the impact your work is already having. You have invested time and resources in a new phonics teaching programme and you have made excellent use of the pupil premium grant to employ and train more teaching assistants to deliver catch-up lessons. Leaders track pupils' progress carefully, intervening quickly at the first sign of any pupil falling behind. As a result, pupils are now making much better progress in developing their phonic knowledge. The pupils who read to me did so

with confidence. They demonstrated early reading skills very successfully, blending letter sounds confidently to sound out new words.

- Older pupils across key stage 2 are also making much better progress in their writing. This is because teachers have high expectations about what pupils can achieve, and because teachers share a consistent understanding about the quality and quantity of written work they expect pupils to produce. Most of the Year 6 pupils are now on track to achieve the expected standard in writing by the end of the school year. A small proportion of them are now writing at an even higher level. The school agrees that more of them could achieve greater depth in writing, including more of the disadvantaged pupils.
- My second line of enquiry was about the effectiveness of senior leadership, including governance. The previous inspection report asked governors to monitor the school's work more closely. Also, many of the governors are new to their role.
- It is clear that leaders at all levels are meticulous and determined in their drive to improve achievement for all pupils. Middle leaders have been influential because they have ensured that staff are well trained, and also because they are thorough and methodical in their tracking of pupils' progress. Subject leaders set high standards in their own classrooms and are good role models who support the professional development of their colleagues.
- New governors have settled quickly into their responsibilities and they know the school well. They employ a good mix of challenge and support to the senior leadership team. Governors strongly uphold the values of the school and they have demonstrated that they will act quickly and decisively when dealing with difficult issues.
- My third line of enquiry was about the support for disadvantaged pupils across the school. In 2016 at key stage 2, disadvantaged pupils at Ramridge Primary did not do as well as their peers in national tests. Leaders are acutely aware of this and have acted quickly to provide additional support for the high proportion of disadvantaged pupils.
- You have used pupil premium funding well to increase the frequency of catch-up sessions in reading, writing and mathematics. Also, the good range of activities designed to improve pupils' social skills has helped pupils raise their self-esteem and boosted their interest in learning.
- The school's own achievement information shows that disadvantaged pupils are now almost always doing as well as their peers, in all subjects. This is particularly evident in the strong progress that the most able disadvantaged pupils are making in writing in key stage 2.
- My final line of enquiry was about how well children in the early years are doing in their learning. There has been a steady improvement in the achievement of children at the end of Reception over the last three years. Nevertheless, their attainment in 2016 had still not caught up with that of other children nationally.
- When we visited the Nursery and Reception classes, it was clear that the children are extremely well cared for. The very good range of carefully planned activities, together with the calm, purposeful environment, allowed children to make really

good progress in their learning. The outdoor area is of exceptional quality and considerable thought has gone into its design. We saw children taking turns in their parachute games, making a witch's potion, practising ball skills, driving the 'Batmobile' and acting out plays on the stage. All the children were busy and happily cooperating together in a purposeful, stimulating learning environment.

- Children often enter the early years with skills which are below those typical for their ages. Adults use skilful questioning to develop communication skills and they make careful assessments of children's progress. Lots of activities, including gardening together and taking sensible risks on the climbing frames, are designed specifically to increase children's social and emotional learning. Consequently, most of the children are now on track to achieve or exceed the good level of development by the end of the year.

Next steps for the school

Leaders and those responsible for governance should ensure that:

- recent improvements in phonics teaching are maintained so that variations in the annual screening check results are eliminated
- the strong focus on pupils' writing continues so that more pupils, including disadvantaged pupils, are writing at greater depth by the end of key stage 2.

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

Yours sincerely

Nick Rudman
Ofsted Inspector

Information about the inspection

I met with you and your deputy to discuss progress since the previous inspection. I held a meeting with your three senior leaders who have responsibility for phonics, English and the early years, to discuss outcomes for pupils and the impact of decisions leaders have made. I met with a group of governors, including the chair of the governing body, and I heard two pupils read. I spoke with a representative from the local authority who knows the school well. I scrutinised a variety of sources of information including your records of monitoring and evaluation, governing body minutes of meetings, and the school's assessment information for all year groups. I also scrutinised the school's safeguarding and child protection procedures, the records of checks leaders make on the suitability of staff to work with children, and information relating to attendance. We both undertook observations of learning across the school, viewed work in pupils' books and spoke with pupils about their learning during lessons.