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Melanie Servent
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Dear Mrs Servent

Short inspection of Yelvertoft Primary School

Following my visit to the school on 28 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 December 2012.

This school continues to be good.

The leadership team has maintained the good quality of education in the school since the last inspection. Since your appointment as headteacher in September 2016, staff and governors have appreciated your approach to school improvement. You have ensured that the effective practice across the school, along with the caring ethos that the whole school community holds dear, have been retained while making well-considered decisions about your priorities for improvements across the school.

At Yelvertoft, everyone takes care of everyone else. Relationships are a real strength of the school. Governors are conscious of staff workload, and you make sure that staff at all levels receive the training they need to carry out their responsibilities effectively. Pupils recognise the benefits of knowing each other well and looking after each other on the playground. Parents appreciate how well cared for their children are at the school, with one describing the school staff as 'particularly helpful and supportive'.

Yours is a school with a strong sense of community. Pupils visit the local church and members of the community are welcomed into school. For example, the local history society played an important role in the school's 140th birthday celebrations. The local branch of the Women's Institute put on a sewing afternoon at the school and made tea for everyone during the May Day celebrations while families enjoyed the pupils' display of maypole dancing. Long-standing traditions such as this sit side

by side with recently established traditions, such as carol singing on the playground. While holding these traditions in high regard, you and your staff are preparing the pupils well for life in modern Britain. The broad curriculum is enhanced by residential visits and trips to the theatre. Displays in the hall explain how the British values of tolerance, the rule of law and individual liberty relate to the pupils' lives. Pupils learn about democracy by voting for their peers to represent them as School Leaders or members of the school council. Pupils recognise the importance of learning about a range of religions and cultures and speak respectfully about people whose lives or beliefs may be different to their own.

At the time of the last inspection, inspectors asked the school leaders to improve the progress pupils make in mathematics, to further improve the quality of teaching and to ensure that key subject leaders follow up their actions. School leaders have successfully tackled each of these areas for improvement. During our visits to the classrooms, we saw effective teaching and learning taking place throughout the school. The progress pupils make in mathematics from their starting points has improved. A higher proportion of Year 6 pupils achieved a greater depth of understanding in mathematics than was seen nationally by the end of 2016. In pupils' books, we saw that teachers match the learning activities very well to pupils' starting points and offer additional challenge to the most able pupils so that they can excel. However, as we examined pupils' books together, we noticed that teachers do not have such high expectations of the most able pupils in their writing.

Following the last inspection, your predecessor ensured that subject leaders were following up their actions. Over recent years, several new teachers have joined the school. Since your arrival, you have reorganised the subject leadership responsibilities throughout the school. While most leaders are new to their post, they have been supported by experienced leaders to write action plans for their subjects. This aspect of leadership is still embryonic and you recognise there is much work to do for these leaders to be fully effective. They do not, for example, make full use of the school's assessment methods to check pupils' progress or have an impact of the quality of teaching and learning in their areas of responsibility.

Safeguarding is effective.

Safeguarding is a high priority at Yelvertoft. Staff and governors have received up-to-date training, including in the 'Prevent' duty. You ensure that all the appropriate vetting checks take place when a new member of staff or volunteer joins the school. Before your arrival, school leaders had implemented an effective method of keeping records relating to safeguarding. You have secured this even further, with additional layers of information to make sure your approach to safeguarding is of the highest quality.

Every parent who responded to the online survey, Parent View, and those who spoke to me personally, agreed that their children are safe and well cared for in school. Pupils also agreed. They say that bullying is extremely rare, but they were confident that if it did happen a trusted adult would help them.

Pupils told me that they are taught about how to keep themselves safe, for example when they use modern technology. They appreciate the visits from police officers to teach them about road safety.

Inspection findings

- At the start of this school year, you and the leader with responsibility for English noted that the proportion of pupils' achieving the expected standard in the phonics check at the end of Year 1 was below the national average. The English leader wasted no time in tackling this. A revised approach to teaching phonics was implemented, supported by training for teachers and teaching assistants. She has since checked that the approach is being consistently followed in classrooms. Early indications show that pupils are achieving well this year. During our tour of the school, one child in the Reception class was writing some words using the skills she had learned in her phonics sessions. She achieved this successfully, proudly declaring, 'There we go!'
- At the same time, you also recognised that the progress pupils were making in writing fell below that seen in reading and mathematics. Once again, you have quickly addressed this shortfall. Teachers have received training in a new method of teaching writing. During lessons, we saw some teachers with very strong subject knowledge capitalising on every opportunity to broaden pupils' vocabulary and strengthen their knowledge and understanding of grammar. All teachers have embraced the approach and work in books shows that pupils are making strong progress this year. For example, one pupil had written, 'The vivid memories came rushing back to them like a lonely silver star crashing to the unwieldy ground...' However, teachers are not typically having high enough expectations of the most able pupils. Too often, teachers have the same success criteria for their writing as they do for the less able pupils in the same class.
- Over recent years, pupils' rates of attendance have fallen below the national average. In partnership with the newly appointed school business manager, you are keeping a very close check on pupils' attendance. You have capitalised on the strong relationships that the school has established with parents to remind them of the importance of their child's regular attendance at school. This has already proved to be a successful approach. Fewer pupils have missed school due to term-time holidays this year and the attendance of pupils has risen overall. It is currently higher than the national average for 2016. The attendance of disadvantaged pupils has also risen so that it is currently at its highest level for three years.
- Pupils are very polite and behave well. They line up sensibly on the playground when it is time to come indoors. They move around school quietly and without fuss. The school offers a purposeful environment, where walls are adorned with displays celebrating pupils' work from across the curriculum. Artwork in the style of Carol Hagan, along with photographs and designs for the 'launching rockets' project, showcase just a small sample of the range of learning pupils enjoy.
- Governors are highly ambitious for the school. They offer support and challenge to leaders in equal measure. A new chair of governors has just been appointed. The outgoing chair is remaining as a governor to ensure a successful handover of

duties to her successor. When vacancies on the board of governors arise, existing governors carefully consider the skills that would be beneficial for a new member to offer and actively seek out new governors who can fulfil this. Minutes of governors' meetings show that governors ask challenging questions of school leaders. You are encouraging them to challenge you even further. They have an accurate view of the school's strengths and priorities for improvement. They are very conscious of the strategic role they have to play, while allowing you to get on with the day-to-day running of the school.

- Pupils play key roles in the life of the school. Year 6 pupils can stand for election to the important status of School Leaders. Elected by their peers at the start of the year, School Leaders help the elected school council members to raise funds for the school, for example by organising bake sales. School Leaders organise a raft of clubs for younger pupils to attend at lunchtime. The clubs, such as chess, computer club and dance, are run by the older pupils and appreciated by the younger pupils who attend. Pupils who spoke with me enjoy taking responsibility in this way. They particularly appreciate the way younger and older pupils mix together harmoniously throughout the school. One pupil summed up the views of many by describing Yelvertoft Primary School as 'friendly, fun and equal.'

Next steps for the school

Leaders and those responsible for governance should ensure that:

- the skills of subject leaders are sharpened so that they are effective in improving the quality of teaching, learning and outcomes for pupils in their areas of responsibility
- teachers have higher expectations of what pupils can achieve in their writing, so that those capable of achieving a greater depth of understanding, including those who are disadvantaged, are enabled to do so.

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

Yours sincerely

Di Mullan
Her Majesty's Inspector

Information about the inspection

During this inspection, I met with the headteacher, the English leader and five other members of staff. I spoke with four members of the governing body, including the chair, and I spoke with a representative of the local authority on the telephone. I spoke with parents as they brought their children to school and considered the views they shared using the online survey, Parent View. I heard two pupils read,

spoke with pupils informally in class and formally with six pupils at lunchtime. I considered the views of pupils and staff through their respective online surveys. I visited every classroom with the headteacher to see the learning taking place and together we examined a range of pupils' books from each year group. I visited the school's breakfast club and reviewed a range of school documentation, including minutes of governors' meetings, the school's self-evaluation and school improvement plans, and documents relating to the safeguarding of pupils.