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Dear Mrs Davies

Short inspection of Foxton 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 May 2012.

This school continues to be good.

The leadership team has maintained the good quality of education in the school since the previous inspection. The school slipped in effectiveness following the previous inspection but, as a new and courageous headteacher, you have ensured that the school is now improving quickly. The school is a happy place where nearly all pupils enjoy their learning.

The previous inspection report asked your school to improve the quality of teaching and learning. Teachers welcome and value your emphasis on professional development and its positive impact on the quality of teaching and learning. This emphasis has spread to teaching assistants. One remarked that they have had more training in the last year than in the whole of the rest of their career. Teaching assistants have been re-focused more clearly on directly supporting learning. Time is used effectively to enable teachers and teaching assistants to collaborate and discuss how teaching assistants can productively contribute to learning. Governors, leaders and all staff are ambitious for the school and its pupils. Governors are well informed and have a good understanding of what the school has needed to do to meet the needs of all its pupils.

You have maintained the caring approach of the school. Every child is known as an individual. Since the previous inspection, there has been a transformational increase in the degree of rigour with which the performance of staff is evaluated. Observation of teaching by leaders is now routine. This is combined with book

checking and analysis of the progress of each pupil.

Behaviour in lessons and around the school is generally positive. Pupils are polite and welcoming. They told me that everyone gets on well together. A small group of pupils in a few year groups occasionally disrupt learning. This is managed well by staff who are supported by their leaders.

Pupils enjoy a wide range of subjects. The curriculum is broad and engaging. Pupils identify the best things about the school as being that everyone is friendly, the teachers are nice and help them with their work, lessons are fun and they enjoy trips. The learning environment is stimulating, both in corridors and classrooms. A parent told me, 'We're also immensely impressed with the time invested by all the staff during and after school hours to create the amazing art, drama, and sporting opportunities for the kids.'

You have developed links with local schools which has had a positive impact on the quality of teaching through the sharing of good practice, planning and training. The local authority has supported you through helping you identify the school's strengths and weakness and then providing advisory support to address the weaknesses.

A minority of parents expressed dissatisfaction with the changes that have taken place in the school since your arrival. I investigated their concerns. The overwhelming evidence from the majority of parents, most pupils and all staff is that the changes were necessary. You have carefully maintained a curriculum that rightly celebrates art and music while ensuring a more rigorous approach to raising standards in English and mathematics. That rigour in assessment in those subjects has not yet been spread to demonstrating pupils' progress across other subjects.

Safeguarding is effective.

The leadership team has ensured that all safeguarding arrangements are fit for purpose and records are detailed and clear. Governors and leaders are rigorous in ensuring that all safeguarding arrangements meet statutory requirements and are effective. For example, a governor makes half-termly checks on recruitment records. Staff are vigilant in reporting any concerns regarding the welfare of pupils.

Staff receive regular training on safeguarding and are up to date on the latest government guidance on keeping children safe. Most importantly, parents' responses and discussion with staff and pupils point to a culture of safeguarding and care which is the hallmark of the school. Internet safety has a high profile, with Year 6 pupils telling me why it is important with the aid of an appropriate story about a chicken and a fox.

Inspection findings

- Before the inspection, I noticed that pupils' progress in reading is stronger than their progress in other subjects. I found that the school has a tradition of reading being a high priority. Phonics is taught effectively. As a result, pupils have useful strategies for reading unfamiliar words. Pupils enjoy reading. In 2016, all pupils achieved at least the expected standard in the Year 1 phonics check. From key stage 1 to 2, pupils made progress in reading that was better than the national average.
- Published information shows that pupils and particularly disadvantaged pupils were doing less well in mathematics than in English. You have recognised that pupils' progress in mathematics has not been as strong as in English. You have responded with a range of measures designed to improve outcomes. There has been a general move to improve learning in mathematics by making the teaching more engaging and ensuring mastery of mathematics topics as pupils move up the school. You have introduced a 'maths homework club' to give pupils out-of-classroom access to computers and staff as well as targeted support for individuals. Teachers and assistants have had a lot of effective training and support in mathematics from the school's mathematics lead and local authority adviser.
- While attendance overall is in line with national expectations, the attendance and persistent absence of a group of pupils in 2016 was poor. I needed to check what actions the school has taken to address this and whether they were effective. As the school is small, a very small number of children with poor attendance has made a significant difference to attendance figures. The school is supported by the local authority in challenging families where persistent absence is having a negative impact on children's education. The vast majority of children enjoy coming to school.
- Published information shows that in 2016, pupils made a good start in the early years. Given their strong start, I wanted to check whether pupils made enough progress as they moved up the school. While pupils achieved well in the early years in 2016, this was not reflected in outcomes in previous years. Over the last 18 months, you and staff have worked hard to ensure that there are now consistently high expectations of pupils' work. In 2016, the progress of pupils from key stage 1 to key stage 2 was broadly in line with other schools nationally. Pupils' progress in writing is improving sharply. Teachers ensure that the fundamentals of good writing are in place from an early age. In Year 6, pupils can write at length.

Next steps for the school

Leaders and those responsible for governance should ensure that:

- all groups of pupils make as strong progress in mathematics as they do in reading
- the school's assessment systems are used to further improve progress in subjects

other than English and mathematics.

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

Adrian Lyons
Her Majesty's Inspector

Information about the inspection

During the inspection, I met with you, teachers and other staff, the chair and members of the governing body, a group of pupils and spoke by telephone to a representative of the local authority. Together with you, I made short visits to all classes to observe teaching, to see pupils at work and look at work in their books. I observed pupils at lunchtime and breaktime. I heard some pupils read. I reviewed school documents about self-evaluation, development planning and safeguarding including the single central record and records of child protection. I also considered the 45 responses to the Ofsted questionnaire from parents, 52 from pupils and 13 responses from staff.