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Ms Lorna Kimberley
Headteacher
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Dear Ms Kimberley

Short inspection of Fremington Community Primary and Nursery School

Following my visit to the school on 9 May 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 November 2012.

This school continues to be good.

The leadership team has maintained the good quality of education in the school since the previous inspection. Teachers, support staff and governors feel strongly that they are part of a team and that their contributions are listened to and valued. Consequently, they undertake their roles effectively. One parent wrote, typically reflecting the views of others, 'The school has changed hugely in the last two years. The children are well cared for, receive a good education and enjoy their learning.'

The very large majority of parents, pupils and staff who completed Ofsted's questionnaires expressed their appreciation of the school's welcoming community atmosphere. Observations of pupils' willing responses to teachers' questions in classes further indicated the good climate for learning that underpins pupils' rapid progress.

Since taking up your position in January 2015, you have brought the school skilfully through a period of instability in staffing and secured the changes needed to bring further improvement. You have taken decisive action to strengthen leadership and management. Leaders at all levels now have clearly defined responsibilities and greater accountability to improve teaching and pupils' outcomes. As a result, all leaders make effective contributions by helping to identify the right areas for development and by taking swift and effective action to bring improvement.

At the time of the previous inspection, the school was asked to improve the consistency of teaching and to help pupils become better at learning for themselves, especially in mathematics. In recent years, you have raised teachers' skills through focused training and sharing expertise with other schools. Teachers across the school now adapt their teaching and provide stimulating learning experiences that consistently challenge pupils and engage them effectively in their work. As a result, pupils are increasingly engrossed in their studies and learn particularly well when, for example, confronted by a range of challenges such as 'Mighty Maths'. However, you and other leaders know that further work is needed to deepen pupils' mathematical understanding, especially in key stage 1.

Safeguarding is effective.

All staff have a clear understanding of their responsibility to keep pupils safe and contribute effectively to the strong culture of safeguarding that the school promotes. Staff receive regular and comprehensive training in safeguarding and child protection, and implement clear procedures for reporting and recording concerns.

Safeguarding is central to the work of members of the governing body. Governors keep their training up to date and regularly check the school's procedures to keep pupils safe. Senior leaders make sure that new staff are recruited safely and administrative staff ensure that records are completed in full accordance with statutory requirements.

Pupils report that they feel safe in school and know that they can approach any adult in school if they have a worry or a concern. When questioned, they said, 'Teachers are great and quick to help us.' Staff work effectively with external agencies when needed to ensure that pupils are well looked after. Parents agree that staff provide good care for their children. Almost all the parents who responded to Ofsted's online questionnaire, Parent View, expressed the view that their children feel safe and happy at school.

Inspection findings

- Our first key line of enquiry examined the support provided for disadvantaged pupils and those who have special educational needs and/or disabilities. This is because national assessments in recent years have shown that the progress made by these pupils has not been as strong as other pupils'.
- In recent terms, specialist and lead practitioners have worked closely with staff to improve their skills and understanding of how to help those pupils who find learning difficult. Staff now identify and tackle the pupils' needs at an earlier stage and use a widened range of strategies to boost their confidence in learning. These developments have strengthened the support and consequently quickened the progress of pupils who have special educational needs and/or disabilities.

- Disadvantaged pupils benefit from additional adult support that helps them to consolidate as well as extend their learning. Current work shows that disadvantaged pupils, including a significant proportion who have special educational needs and/or disabilities and some who are most able, are making better progress now. Staff ensure that pupils at risk of falling behind, which increasingly includes some new to the school, are helped to catch up.
- Our second line of enquiry investigated what leaders and teachers have done to improve writing, especially boys' writing, across key stage 2. This is because school and national assessments have highlighted this aspect as a particular weakness.
- Across key stage 2, teachers have raised their expectations and placed greater emphasis on developing boys' interest in writing and what they can achieve. As a consequence, boys are working more confidently and enriching their skills by thinking and writing more creatively. This is particularly evident in boys' imaginatively written instructions about how to make an 'eyeball smoothie'. Pupils use grammar and punctuation with increasing accuracy and make lively vocabulary choices, for example describing story characters like 'The tear thief'.
- All pupils, across the range of ability, are responding well to teachers' guidance and clearly strive to improve their progress. For example, pupils readily use dictionaries to check their spelling and willingly edit their own and each other's work. You have identified that there is still work to do to improve pupils' handwriting in Years 3 and 4. Even so, there is clear evidence of pupils' much improved and stronger progress in writing through key stage 2.
- Our third key line of enquiry examined the work of leaders and teachers to improve standards in key stage 1, especially boys' writing and girls' mathematics. This is because Year 2 outcomes have been below average in these aspects.
- You have skilfully managed staff changes in Years 1 and 2 and eliminated inconsistencies in teaching. You and your leadership team have provided well-targeted training to raise teachers' expectations of what pupils should achieve. In particular, teachers now liaise more effectively with skilled early years staff, and assess and identify pupils' needs at an earlier stage. This is enabling teachers to ensure that the work they present to the pupils challenges them at the right level in relation to their starting points. Consequently, pupils are developing their skills and understanding more quickly. For example, girls are now tackling mathematical problems with growing confidence and boys are constructing meaningful sentences with increasing accuracy. However, you recognise that further work is needed to improve pupils' spelling and handwriting and to build skills of mathematical reasoning.
- Our fourth key line of enquiry examined the teaching and learning of phonics. This is because the proportion of pupils meeting expectations in Year 1 phonics screening checks has been below average in recent years.

- Staff have responded well to increased training opportunities and the strengthened focus placed on improving the teaching of phonics. This is seen in the consistent and effective teaching in the early years and key stage 1 classes of letters and the sounds they represent. Teachers are liaising effectively with parents to encourage their support for children's reading at home. Clear improvement is evident in the higher than average proportion of pupils in Year 1 who now demonstrate the expected level of phonic skills in their reading.

Next steps for the school

Leaders and governors should ensure that:

- teachers give more emphasis to the development of pupils' handwriting skills, especially in classes across Years 1 to 4
- teachers in key stage 1:
 - further develop the ability of pupils to spell words accurately
 - sustain the focus on deepening pupils' mathematical reasoning and problem-solving skills.

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

Yours sincerely

Alexander Baxter
Ofsted Inspector

Information about the inspection

During the inspection, I held meetings with you and with the other staff with leadership responsibilities. I met with members of the governing body and held a telephone conversation with a representative of the local authority. I visited classrooms with you and together we scrutinised samples of pupils' work in books. I talked with individual staff during visits to classrooms, and with pupils and support staff during the morning break. In addition, I examined a range of documents relating to safeguarding, pupils' attendance, progress, and the school's self-evaluation and development. I took account of 27 responses to Parent View and additional parents' written comments. I also took note of 11 responses to the staff questionnaire and responses from six pupils to their questionnaire.