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21 June 2017

Mrs Karen Rixon
Rendell Primary School
Rendell Street
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Dear Mrs Rixon

Short inspection of Rendell Primary School

Following my visit to the school on 6 June 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 judged to be good in April 2013.

This school continues to be good.

The leadership team has maintained the good quality of education in the school since the last inspection. Under your clear leadership, senior and middle leaders form a cohesive team that works very well together to create a positive, caring school ethos that is shared by pupils, staff, parents and the governing body. You and the other staff embrace new ideas and initiatives. Your outward-looking approach and collaborative work with other schools are helping to develop the expertise of middle leaders and other staff. They are improving approaches to many aspects of teaching and learning.

Pupils enjoy their learning and make good progress. Parents were almost unanimous in their praise for the school. Pupils told me about the wide curricular opportunities your school provides and which they enjoy greatly. This was evident in the rich range of displays celebrating all aspects of learning and school life.

Behaviour is excellent throughout the school and pupils treat each other with respect. They are proud of their school and have very positive attitudes to learning. Teachers are enthusiastic and create an ethos that encourages pupils to enjoy and be successful in their learning.

Middle leaders feel empowered by your leadership. They effectively check and evaluate pupils' attainment and progress and lead initiatives to bring about school improvements. Together with the governing body, you and other members of the leadership team have worked successfully to tackle the areas for improvement identified in the last report. You have introduced a wide range of initiatives to

improve standards, particularly in English and mathematics. Teachers provide pupils with frequent opportunities to develop their problem-solving skills in mathematics. Pupils enthusiastically told me about the mathematical investigations they undertake on 'challenge Fridays'. The new approach to the teaching of phonics in the early years and key stage 1 is having clear impact and staff have benefited from the training they have received. New approaches to the teaching of reading and writing in key stage 2 are also having considerable impact on pupils' learning. Pupils now complete sustained pieces of writing in different subjects. They do not, however, consistently apply their spelling and grammar skills in their work.

Governors regularly visit the school, meet teachers and middle leaders, and have a good understanding of the school's strengths and aspects in which it can improve further. Leaders' plans for improvement sometimes do not sharply enough link initiatives to pupils' progress and attainment to support even more rapid improvement. This means that the governing body is not in a position to hold the school fully to account for specific aspects of its work or the achievement of groups of pupils.

Safeguarding is effective.

The school has a strong culture of safeguarding. The leadership team has ensured that all safeguarding arrangements are fit for purpose. Records are detailed and of high quality. Staff and the designated leader for safeguarding carefully record any concerns and act swiftly to deal with them. Recruitment processes are thorough.

Pupils are confident that adults will help them if needed and they feel safe. Pupils spoke with good knowledge about their personal safety, in terms of 'stranger danger', for example, and in their understanding of the ways they can stay safe online. Parents who responded to Parent View, Ofsted's online survey, were unanimous that their children feel safe.

Inspection findings

- In 2016, standards in writing were lower than in reading and mathematics at the end of Year 6. Pupils' work and the school's own assessment information show that the new approaches to teaching phonics in the early years and key stage 1, and the teaching of reading and writing in key stage 2, are accelerating pupils' progress and rapidly raising their attainment in writing. Teachers ensure that pupils are given opportunities to write at length in different subjects and the quality of pupils' handwriting and presentation has improved. However, teachers do not consistently ensure that pupils' spelling and grammar are accurate, which sometimes reduces the quality of the work pupils complete.
- The headteacher and other members of the leadership team have been effective in raising standards in mathematics. A new structure for teaching and learning has been developed and teachers provide regular opportunities to challenge pupils through problem-solving activities. This was observed in Year 6, for example, where pupils enjoyed a 'graffiti-maths' lesson, discussing and recording their ideas on their desks as they worked to solve complex problems. In another

class, pupils were working well together to plan a residential school trip with a specific budget. The school is well placed to develop and deepen pupils' reasoning skills further by providing more opportunities for them to record their thinking.

- Teachers work closely together to identify ways in which they can further improve the quality of their teaching. Staff morale is high. Teachers have benefited from a range of training, including further developing their skills in assessing pupils' learning by moderating pupils' work with other teachers. This has included a clear focus on whether pupils are working at the standard expected for their age or are working at greater depth. Teachers now plan more accurately, with work that is carefully matched to pupils' abilities so that pupils can make the progress of which they are capable.
- Leaders know the strengths and weaknesses of the school well and are successfully driving the school forward. The actions they are taking are raising standards. Plans for improvement, however, do not focus sharply enough on the progress and attainment of pupils, to support even more rapid improvement and to enable the governing body to challenge leaders more effectively.
- In 2016, the achievement of disadvantaged pupils leaving Year 6, particularly those who were the most able, was lower than that of other pupils. Leaders use the pupil premium funding to ensure that disadvantaged pupils develop as confident, well-rounded individuals. A range of initiatives, such as the 'achievement for all' focused interventions, are having a positive impact on disadvantaged pupils' attainment and progress. Assessment information and pupils' work show that disadvantaged pupils are rapidly catching up with their peers and other pupils nationally. Leaders' plans, however, are not sufficiently focused on the achievement of disadvantaged pupils to drive even more rapid progress.

Next steps for the school

Leaders and those responsible for governance should ensure that:

- they focus their plans for improvement more sharply on pupils' attainment and progress, including for disadvantaged pupils, to bring about even more rapid improvement in standards
- staff give greater emphasis to teaching pupils to use and apply their spelling and grammar skills more accurately to improve further the quality of their writing.

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

Yours sincerely

John Lawson
Her Majesty's Inspector

Information about the inspection

During the inspection, I met you and shared with you my key lines of enquiry. I also met with the deputy headteacher, phase leaders, three members of the governing body, pupils from Year 6, and parents at the start of the school day. I considered the 26 responses to Parent View, Ofsted's online survey, as well as responses to surveys of pupils and staff. We visited a sample of classes in the school, spending a short time in each, and I looked at a sample of pupils' work with you and the deputy headteacher.

I viewed a range of documents, including the school's evaluation of its own performance, plans for further development, information about how the pupil premium funding is spent, minutes of meetings of the governing body and a number of policy documents, including those for safeguarding.