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Mrs Lyn Lyman
Headteacher
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Dear Mrs Lyman

Short inspection of Icknield Primary School

Following my visit to the school on 6 June 2017 with Janet Tomkins, Ofsted Inspector, 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 January 2013.

This school continues to be good.

The leadership team has maintained the good quality of education in the school since the last inspection. As headteacher, you have successfully developed an ethos for the school that staff, governors and pupils share. The school's motto, 'We can achieve if we believe', is interwoven into the work of the school, so that pupils understand that they must aim high and work hard to achieve their goals. As one pupil told me: 'If you believe you can do it, you will!'

You are a highly respected, dedicated and knowledgeable leader with a very clear commitment to improving the outcomes that pupils achieve. All 47 staff members who responded to Ofsted's questionnaire agreed that the school is led and managed well. Teachers and support staff feel strongly that they are part of a team and that their contributions are listened to and valued. While raising expectations of teachers, you have ensured that the support and challenge that you provide for them mean that they are keen to continue to improve their practice. Teachers know that they will be held to account for the progress pupils make, but they also know that you will support them in undertaking new initiatives to improve their work too.

Parents hold the school in high esteem. They appreciate the hard work of staff and the opportunities that they have to attend assemblies, workshops and other events, to celebrate their children's achievements and to find out how to support their children's learning at home.

Pupils are very proud of their school and talk confidently about how they

demonstrate the school's '3Cs – care, cooperation and communication'. Pupils said that everyone is welcome at Icknield Primary because, 'We are like a family in this school, a great big, happy family.' You and leaders have ensured that pupils have access to enriching learning experiences through the vibrant and well-designed curriculum. Effective links between subjects provide meaningful opportunities for pupils to use and apply the skills that they have been taught in mathematics and English.

Governors share your enthusiasm and desire to improve the school further. They are highly committed to knowing the school's strengths and weaknesses through frequent visits to the school and discussions with pupils, parents and staff. You and governors use this accurate understanding of the school's effectiveness to make appropriate, purposeful changes to teaching and learning.

An area for development identified at your previous inspection was to improve the consistency of provision in the early years. This was because the three Reception classes did not have equal access to the outdoor learning environment, as the classes were sited in different parts of the school. Since then, you and governors have relocated the three Reception classes, and they now share the same large indoor and outdoor area. Your capable deputy headteacher oversees the quality of teaching, learning and assessment in the Reception classes. This ensures that the early years staff provide a very positive learning environment where all children flourish. During the inspection, I observed children enjoying the activities that teachers plan for them and behaving very well. Consequently, the proportion of children achieving a good level of development continues to increase and is now in line with the national average.

Another area for development from the previous inspection was to accelerate the rate of progress for all pupils, by ensuring that teaching is matched to pupils' different levels of ability, especially for the most able pupils. You and your leadership team work effectively to ensure that teaching standards are high across the school.

Teachers and pupils have positive relationships, and pupils willingly follow teachers' instructions in lessons. Leaders ensure that teachers plan lessons that hold pupils' interests and capture their imaginations. Classrooms are calm and friendly places where pupils can be seen enjoying their learning experiences. Teaching assistants are well trained and provide positive support, often using effective questioning to develop pupils' language skills. This enables pupils to think about their learning and explain their answers more successfully. As a result, most pupils make consistently strong progress from their starting points. However, you acknowledge that there are occasions when the most able pupils do not have the opportunity to apply their skills, and the work they do is not always challenging enough.

Safeguarding is effective.

There is a strong culture of keeping pupils safe. You and governors have ensured that all safeguarding arrangements are fit for purpose and records are detailed and

of high quality. You work closely with other professionals and services to ensure that children and families receive timely and effective support. Robust systems are in place for the recruitment and induction of new staff. The training that staff receive means that they are effective in recognising and responding to signs of concern.

Pupils behave very well in lessons and around the school because of the excellent relationships that they have with staff and the high standards of behaviour that all staff consistently expect of them. Pupils have complete faith that adults in the school will listen to them if they have any worries. They do not feel that bullying is an issue. Pupils are confident that staff deal with any rare issues of poor behaviour firmly and fairly. Parents are also confident that their children are safe and well looked after.

Inspection findings

- In order to check that the school remains good, one of the key lines of enquiry that I explored was how effectively leaders are improving the quality of teaching across the school and, consequently, the achievement of pupils. The previous inspection identified the need to develop the skills of senior leaders in order to strengthen the school's capacity to further drive up standards.
- You and the governors have effectively developed the school's leadership team. You are ably supported by the deputy headteacher and two assistant headteachers. Leaders gather information from a range of sources, for example, undertaking frequent observations of lessons and looking at pupils' work. Regular analysis of this information, in meetings between leaders and teachers, is creating a professional dialogue about the impact of teaching on pupils' learning. This is supporting teachers to continually reflect on their practice and to make sure that learning tasks are more precisely matched to pupils' learning needs.
- Your middle leaders have received training from more experienced colleagues, so are knowledgeable and confident to provide subject-specific support to further enhance the quality of teaching. By linking performance management targets to school improvement priorities, leaders are very effective in continuing to secure school improvement.
- Another area that I looked at was how effectively phonics is taught, and whether pupils make good enough progress in this area from their starting points. The published data shows that the proportion of pupils that reached the expected level in the Year 1 phonics check has been below the national average for the last three years.
- Leaders have rightly taken effective action to tackle the previous weaknesses in phonics teaching. You have trained staff to deliver a well-planned and structured approach across the school. Pupils' progress is closely tracked, and targeted support is put in place to improve pupils' outcomes. Pupils enjoy reading and use their knowledge of phonics effectively to help them to work out unfamiliar words. Teachers provide pupils with many opportunities to practise and develop these skills further.

- As a result, school assessment information indicates that children's attainment in phonics has improved and is now in line with the national average.
- My final line of enquiry was about pupils' attendance. Since the previous inspection, the attendance figures for the school have been below the national average. Disadvantaged pupils and pupils who have special educational needs and/or disabilities have had particularly high rates of absence and persistent absence.
- You have rightly identified improving rates of attendance as a school priority. The school's attendance officer has introduced a range of approaches to ensure that pupils regularly come to school. This includes working closely with the educational welfare officer to monitor the attendance of pupils. The importance of pupils' regular attendance is communicated clearly to parents at induction meetings and on posters around the school. Pupils' good attendance is celebrated through popular class and individual rewards. The school's family workers support families in which pupils' attendance is a concern.
- As a result of these newly introduced strategies, the school's current information shows that most pupils now benefit from more regular attendance. However, you agree that further work needs to be done to ensure that attendance rates continue to improve and all pupils attend school often enough.

Next steps for the school

Leaders and those responsible for governance should ensure that:

- the most able pupils are consistently challenged across all subjects, so that they achieve all that they are capable of
- the recent work on improving the attendance of pupils is further developed so that no pupils are disadvantaged by low attendance.

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

Fiona Webb
Her Majesty's Inspector

Information about the inspection

- Meetings were held with you, the deputy headteacher, assistant headteachers, middle leaders and governors, including the chair of governors. We discussed the key lines of enquiry for this inspection, the school's internal evaluation of its performance, plans for future improvement and information about current pupils' attendance, progress and attainment.

- Inspectors gathered a range of evidence to judge the quality of teaching, learning and assessment. This included joint observations of teaching and learning in classes with you, or the deputy headteacher, and sampling of pupils' current work across all subjects and across a wide range of abilities.
- There were no responses to Ofsted's online pupil survey to take into consideration. However, inspectors spoke informally to a number of pupils in classrooms about their learning and met more formally with two groups of pupils to talk about their school experiences.
- Policies and procedures for the safeguarding of pupils were examined, including mandatory checks made during the recruitment of new staff and case studies about referrals made to external agencies. A discussion was held with you as the school's designated safeguarding lead.
- The lead inspector also met with the local authority improvement adviser.
- The views of 24 parents who responded to Parent View were taken into account, as well as the 22 responses parents made using the free-text service.
- Inspectors also considered the 47 responses to Ofsted's online staff survey.