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Alison Simmons
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Dear Mrs Simmons

Short inspection of Sturton by Stow Primary School

Following my visit to the school on 20 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 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.

Along with the governing body, you have accurately identified areas for improvement and tackled these in a timely manner and with success. As a result, children's achievement at the end of the early years and pupils' results in the phonics (letters and the sounds they represent) screening check have been consistently above national averages for the last three years. In 2016, however, pupils leaving Year 6 made below average progress from their starting points in mathematics. Pupils in other year groups in key stage 2 also make slower progress than they should in mathematics.

Pupils' behaviour and conduct are exemplary. Pupils are exceptionally well-mannered and engage highly effectively with adults around school. They feel valued and cared for. They cooperate well, enjoy working and playing together and they are proud of the jobs that they do around school. The school prefects value the privilege of awarding house points to other children at the school. One child told me, 'I think we work as hard as the staff.'

During my visit, the school hosted a party of children from Belarus who worked alongside pupils in Year 6. Working in partnership, they quickly tackled the inspiring tasks that the teacher had set for them, despite being unable to communicate

verbally. Pupils extended a warm and friendly welcome to the visitors and made many arrangements, including a football activity at playtime, to make their visit a memorable one. One girl told me, 'Even though we don't speak the same language, we can still get on well.'

Parents are proud of the school and hold it in high regard. They told me that children enjoy being at school and that they are well cared for. One parent explained that, although they had moved out of the area, their child continued to attend the school because 'We wouldn't want her to go anywhere else. We love it.' This is reflected in attendance figures, which are higher than those found nationally. The exception is the attendance of pupils who have special educational needs and/or disabilities, which is among the lowest in the country.

Children say that bullying is extremely rare and the school's records confirm that this is the case. Incidents of poor behaviour are also rare. When incidents occur, however, they are dealt with in a robust and supportive way.

Governors are committed and passionate about the school and have a clear vision for the future. The governing body is knowledgeable about its duties and carries these out effectively. Governors have a good understanding of the strengths and weaknesses of the school and make regular checks to see how well the school's actions are bringing about improvement. The school's plans for improvement, however, are not clearly enough defined to allow the governing body to challenge leaders fully and hold them to account.

Your school slogan, 'Small enough to care, big enough to inspire', was clearly evident during my visit. Children and pupils are well cared for and inspired by the adults that they work with.

Safeguarding is effective.

The leadership team has ensured that all safeguarding arrangements are fit for purpose and records are detailed and of high quality. This includes the use of a risk-assessment indicator to help identify the urgency of any concerns that are raised. The governing body has a secure understanding of its safeguarding responsibilities and governors regularly monitor the work of the school.

The school's single central record meets requirements and is comprehensively maintained. Senior leaders undertake regular reviews of child protection records to check for patterns or repeated concerns. The school has implemented a robust system to ensure that requirements for staff training in safeguarding matters are identified and reviewed termly.

Inspection findings

- Pupils' slow progress in mathematics in key stage 2 has led you to take action to increase pupil's fluency in mathematical calculation, their reasoning skills and the depth of their understanding. Pupils' books show the positive effect of this action and show that more pupils are achieving what is expected of them for their age. Many are now making good progress from their starting points. Assessments undertaken at the end of the spring term, however, showed some regression. You indicated this was due to the changes you have made in the way you assess pupils' work to ensure increased accuracy of your assessment.
- You have put well-chosen actions in place to make sure that more pupils in key stage 1 make faster progress in reading. Whole-school reading events, daily whole-class reading activities and the targeted use of adults have resulted in more children being on track to achieve greater depth. Children read fluently, decode unfamiliar words and talk confidently about what they have read. Older children use inference and deduction effectively, but younger children were not as secure in these areas. Again, you indicated that changes in the way you assess pupils' work resulted in a dip in attainment in the spring term. Assessments are now more accurate, however, and younger pupils are now making good progress.
- Disadvantaged pupils are doing well. In 2016, the progress of disadvantaged pupils leaving Year 6 was not significantly different from that of all pupils nationally in reading, writing and mathematics. You are aware, however, that some of these children are still not reaching the standards expected of their age and you are currently tackling this issue with determination. The school's strategy for using the pupil premium funding sets out the barriers facing disadvantaged pupils and the actions that are taken to overcome them. The impact of these actions is reviewed every few weeks, resulting in this remaining a high-profile group within the school.
- Pupils who have special educational needs and/or disabilities had high rates of absence in 2016. You are aware that this was due to a small number of pupils, some of whom have significant, complex medical needs. You have worked effectively with other agencies to support regular school attendance among these pupils. Their attendance has improved as a result of this work.
- The school's improvement plans focus on the right issues and have well-defined actions to bring success. The targets contained within them, however, are not precise enough. Some are not measureable and lack interim milestones. This means that the governing body is not regularly able to hold leaders to account for the effectiveness of actions taken.

Next steps for the school

Leaders and those responsible for governance should ensure that:

- teachers focus on improving pupils' calculation skills and reasoning in mathematics, and on deepening their mathematical understanding, so that pupils make faster progress
- teachers gain confidence in using the new assessment procedures and make better use of assessment information in planning pupils' work
- they set precise targets in plans for improvement and include measurable milestones and timescales against which the governing body can hold senior leaders to account.

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

Yours sincerely

Victor Wilkinson
Ofsted Inspector

Information about the inspection

During the inspection, I met with you to share the school's self-evaluation and my key lines of enquiry for the inspection. We also met to talk about pupils' attendance and safeguarding procedures. I met with three governors and the leaders of English, mathematics and the school's pupil premium strategy. I had discussions with pupils from Years 2 and 6 and with parents at the start of the school day. I considered the responses of parents posted on Parent View, Ofsted's online survey. We visited all classes in the school together, spending a short time in each. I had a telephone conversation with a representative of the local authority. We looked at a sample of pupils' work together. I viewed a range of documents, including the school's improvement plan, the single central record, minutes of meetings of the governing body and behaviour logs.