

Ofsted
Piccadilly Gate
Store Street
Manchester
M1 2WD

T 0300 123 4234
www.gov.uk/ofsted



3 August 2017

Mrs Karen Sewell
Executive Headteacher
Diss Infant and Nursery School with Children's Centre
Fitzwalter Road
Diss
Norfolk
IP22 4PU

Dear Mrs Sewell

Short inspection of Diss Infant and Nursery School with Children's Centre

Following my visit to the school on 24 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 May 2013.

This school continues to be good.

The leadership team has maintained the good quality of education in the school since the last inspection. You told me about changes in leadership since that time and shared that you were about to retire, in fact, at the end of the week of inspection. You have been the executive headteacher of the federation which includes Diss Infant and Nursery School, Diss Church of England Junior School and Diss Children's Centre for two years. In this strategic role, focusing on managing the federation and its long-term development, you have worked closely with the deputy headteacher of this school to ensure a positive, warm and welcoming culture and a strong sense of community. Your deputy headteacher, who has a key role in managing the day-to-day running of the school, commands the confidence of staff and the local authority. She has provided effective and informed leadership for the further improvement of teaching and learning.

Children and pupils enjoy school and have very positive attitudes to learning. They behave exceptionally well in lessons and as they move around the school. Throughout the school, children and pupils are highly engaged in lessons and enthusiastic about their learning. Some told me, for example, how much they love reading and enjoy the reading challenges, not least because 'you can get a book voucher!' as one Year 1 boy excitedly told me. The strengths in personal development and behaviour seen at the time of the previous inspection are still evident. Children and pupils are nurtured and supported extremely well, especially those who have special educational need and/or disabilities, so that they are happy, confident and self-assured. The lively and interesting curriculum is reflected in

vibrant displays around the school.

The school has addressed the issues from the last inspection with increasing success. For example, handwriting has improved, and children learn to join letters when they write from the very start of the early years. Pupils now have more opportunities to practise their writing skills in English and in other subjects. However, when we looked at books, your deputy headteacher and I agreed that there are still occasions when teachers do not give pupils enough time to write in lessons and do not provide them with a wide enough range of purposes for writing. This especially relates to pupils of middle ability. Teachers and teaching assistants now question pupils more effectively to challenge their thinking and ensure that they are actively engaged and involved in learning. However, results in reading and mathematics were not as good in 2016, especially for middle-attaining pupils, as in previous years. You, your deputy headteacher and other leaders have responded quickly and thoughtfully to adjust the school's provision so that it better meets the requirements of the more demanding key stage 1 curriculum. Your deputy headteacher, working with the early years leader, has also adopted a more rigorous approach to teaching in the Nursery and Reception classes. This has successfully strengthened the development of early literacy skills, and the impact is particularly evident in the Nursery. Children in the early years had already been getting a good start to their education. It is now even better.

The school has worked well with the local authority to look at ways of raising achievement further. An interim executive board (IEB), which recently replaced the governing body, has made a strong start and provides effective challenge and scrutiny of the school's work. The board, working with leaders, is focused on strengthening the transition between Years 1 and 2 to counteract something of a dip in standards of work when pupils move to the junior school site, where the Year 2 classrooms are sited. We agreed that this work is key to continue the improvement of achievement, especially for middle-ability pupils.

The capacity for improvement is strong because leaders, including the deputy headteacher, the early years leader and subject leaders, are using their accurate knowledge of the school's strengths and weaknesses to focus on the right areas for development. Members of the IEB and the local authority are providing school leaders with the right support to help them tackle weaker areas of performance.

Safeguarding is effective.

Leaders and staff look after pupils well. A strong culture of care is evident and, consequently, pupils are happy and safe at school. The leadership team has ensured that all safeguarding procedures are fit for purpose. Records are detailed and of high quality. The records show clearly that the school takes appropriate action and in a timely way to safeguard children and pupils.

The deputy headteacher, who is the school's safeguarding lead, knows children and pupils across the school extremely well as individuals. She maintains a close eye on those who are more in need of support and help. Leaders and staff have well-

established relationships with parents and provide strong support for families as well as children and pupils. They make good use of the resources and services that the children's centre provides, referring parents to these as necessary.

Inspection findings

- I followed a number of lines of enquiry, one of which was focused on how well pupils who attained broadly expected standards at the end of their Reception Year were progressing across key stage 1. This was because in key stage 1 tests in 2016, fewer of these pupils had attained expected standards in reading and science compared to similar pupils nationally. In addition, not enough of these middle-attaining pupils achieved greater depth in mathematics.
- Inspection evidence indicates that middle-attaining pupils, including those who are disadvantaged, are currently making good progress in reading, mathematics and science. Pupils enjoy their work and are well motivated to learn. Year 1 pupils are developing their reading skills well and the more robust approach to teaching phonics this year is ensuring that they are making better progress than in previous years. By Year 2, middle-attaining pupils are fluent readers and explain well what is happening in the books and texts they are reading. However, some pupils in Year 2, especially boys, are reading books that are a little easy for them.
- Pupils of all abilities are given challenging work in mathematics. Teachers provide pupils with good opportunities to practise different ways of working out increasingly complex problems in mathematics and to discuss how they solve these. The challenge for middle-attaining pupils, especially in Year 2, is occasionally not high enough.
- Work in books, and on display, shows a good focus on science work. Pupils have good opportunities to develop their science skills and to write science reports. The middle-attaining pupils, including disadvantaged pupils, are doing as well as others in developing scientific skills and knowledge.
- The school effectively tracks the development of individual children and pupils and analyses the progress and attainment of a number of different groups, such as disadvantaged pupils or boys and girls. However, its data system does not enable leaders to check how well children and pupils of different ability groups are performing. This means that, in some instances, pupils are not challenged to achieve all they can.
- My next area of focus was on the extent to which leaders make effective use of the early years pupil premium funding to narrow the gap in attainment between disadvantaged children and the others. This was because in 2015 and 2016 fewer of these children achieved a good level of development in reading and writing compared to others.
- From our visits to the Nursery and Reception classes, and my examination of children's learning journeys and writing books, it is evident that children eligible for the early years pupil premium are making good progress. Those in the Nursery are making particularly strong progress because reading and writing are built very skilfully into activities across all areas of learning. For example, children

making cup cakes followed a recipe and others who had been role playing as astronauts drew pictures of rockets and had a go at writing about their role play.

- Leaders are consciously working on accelerating reading and writing skills in Nursery and Reception to prepare children even more securely for Year 1. They are establishing better foundations for reading and writing by helping children to develop wider vocabulary and stronger speaking and listening skills. Consequently, children are interested in books and reading and then are keen to retell stories they have heard, talked about and role played. Their enthusiasm for writing is also evident, as they have more to say when writing, having spent time talking about their experiences and learning new words and ways of expressing ideas.
- My final line of enquiry focused on whether leaders were doing enough to improve the attendance of pupils who have special educational needs and/or disabilities and disadvantaged pupils. This was because attendance figures for the last three years showed that this group attends less well than other pupils.
- The school's information and analysis of individual cases demonstrates that leaders spend a lot of time working with parents and external professionals to improve attendance levels for any pupil who is not attending regularly, including any who have special educational needs and/or disabilities or who are disadvantaged. For some who have special educational needs and/or disabilities, attendance is affected by their medical needs. The school's work has a positive impact on those with low levels of attendance and their attendance is improving well, though for some it continues to be lower than it should be.
- The school works closely with parents to try and help them to address issues and barriers to good attendance. Your deputy headteacher is highly committed to continuing the work already in place to improve attendance and is using every strategy possible to reduce absence to the minimum.

Next steps for the school

Leaders and those responsible for governance should ensure that:

- they are more forensic in analysing the progress of different groups of pupils so that all children and pupils are challenged to achieve well
- they improve the transition between Year 1 and Year 2 so that all groups of pupils continue to make good progress in reading and mathematics and have good opportunities to practise writing for different purposes and audiences.

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

Yours sincerely

Gulshanbir Kayembe
Ofsted Inspector

Information about the inspection

I met with you and your deputy headteacher to discuss progress since the previous inspection and to share my key lines of enquiry. In addition, I held meetings with the chair of the IEB, another member of the board and the local authority officer who has been working with the school over the last year. I spoke with the early years coordinator, who also leads on science, and the subject leader for mathematics to discuss their roles across the school. As part of the inspection, I looked at a variety of documents and records, including your self-evaluation summary, the school improvement plan and the school's assessment information. I also scrutinised the school's safeguarding and child protection procedures, the records of checks leaders make on the suitability of staff to work with children, and information relating to attendance and behaviour. Together, we undertook observations of learning across the school, viewed work in pupils' books, and talked to pupils about their learning. During breaktime, I observed pupils around the school and held conversations with them about their work and their views of the school. In addition, I held a discussion with a group of pupils from Year 2 and listened to them reading. I examined the survey results from 14 members of staff. Finally, I spoke to a number of parents as they dropped their children off at school and took into account the responses of 61 parents to the Ofsted online questionnaire, Parent View. This included comments many had made by text.