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Mrs Linda Allison
Headteacher
Denver Voluntary Controlled Primary School
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Dear Mrs Allison

Short inspection of Denver Voluntary Controlled Primary School

Following my visit to the school on 12 July 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 September 2012.

This school continues to be good.

The leadership team has maintained and developed the good quality of education in the school since the last inspection. You, senior leaders and governors accurately identify the school's strengths and areas for further development. You take appropriate and effective actions to secure continuous school improvement. Leaders understand their roles and responsibilities and have an accurate view of the quality of teaching and learning across the school. Our learning walks and my scrutiny of written work in pupils' books confirm the school's views.

The school has a caring ethos where pupils feel valued, safe and well supported. You set high expectations of both staff and pupils. As a result, most pupils are well behaved, highly motivated and keen to learn. Staff consistently insist on the highest standards of presentation of work and pupils take a pride in their activities, producing neat and well-set-out work.

Pupils told me how much they enjoy coming to school. They stated that learning is fun and staff listen to them. Pupils are polite and well mannered. Year 6 pupils are proud to wear their red jackets. These pupils are responsible and respected members of the school.

Most parents who responded to the online questionnaire, Parent View, agreed that

their children are safe and well looked after. However, parents have more mixed views about how well leaders respond to their concerns around issues of behaviour and the information they receive regarding their children's progress. Inspection evidence shows that the class behaviour logs and your behaviour file contain appropriate records of few behavioural incidents. These are dealt with quickly and effectively. You, other leaders and governors recognise that there is still more work to do to communicate effectively with parents so that more understand the highly positive work of the school. The detailed end-of-year reports you produce suitably explain to parents how well their children have achieved over the academic year.

You are proud of the stimulating learning environments your staff have created, with attractive displays of pupils' work in classrooms and throughout the school. Every space is well used. You are also proud of achieving the national School Games Mark at silver level. The new school song, relating to the school's values of 'discover, value, celebrate and praise', was written, performed and produced by Year 5 and Year 6 pupils and the music specialist. The song is on the school's website for all to enjoy.

You and your leaders have worked diligently this year to improve pupils' outcomes by the end of key stage 2. The school's provisional results and teacher assessments for 2017 indicate that a high proportion of pupils have reached the expected and higher standards in reading, writing and mathematics. Evidence in Year 6 pupils' books show that they have made good or better progress this year, and the school's internal information indicates that progress has improved. You acknowledge that pupils need to make good and better progress in each year group and across each key stage in a wide range of subjects, as the next area for development.

Safeguarding is effective.

There is a strong culture of safeguarding within the school. You ensure that all safeguarding arrangements are fit for purpose and detailed records are of the highest quality. All staff and governors have undertaken recent safeguarding training. They have read and understand the most recent statutory guidance for safeguarding. Staff know pupils well and are therefore quick to identify concerns, which are investigated swiftly.

Pupils I spoke with told me that they feel safe, because everyone knows each other and the school is a friendly place. They stated that poor behaviour is rare, but if they have any concerns then they can identify an adult to support them.

Pupils know how to keep themselves safe and can explain this in a way that is appropriate for their age. For example, they are taught how to stay safe on the internet and know what to do during a fire drill.

Attendance is high and improving. Pupils are rarely persistently absent because leaders and staff promote good attendance well. A recent newsletter from

governors reminded parents about the importance of attendance, especially in the last few weeks of the summer term.

Inspection findings

- To ascertain that the school remained good, my first line of enquiry was about reading in key stage 2. This is because in 2015, attainment and expected progress were similar to national averages and the proportion of pupils making more than expected progress was well below the national average. Then, in 2016, the progress Year 6 pupils made by the end of key stage 2 was in the lowest 10% nationally. Too few pupils reached the expected standard, especially boys, and no pupil reached greater depth in their learning.
- You and the assistant headteacher have taken effective action to improve the quality of teaching and learning in reading across the school, particularly in key stage 2. We observed Year 5 pupils discussing thought-provoking questions about the challenging text they were reading, to deepen their understanding. Year 6 pupils read fluently and with confidence and work in their books shows that they regularly develop their comprehension and inference skills. The school's provisional 2017 national test results and teacher assessments for reading indicate that the proportions of Year 6 boys and girls who have reached age-related expectations and greater depth are well above the provisional national averages.
- Pupils in the Years 3 and 4 class were not as adept at explaining their thinking about texts at a deeper level. The written work about the texts pupils have read shows good progress across key stage 2 overall, but it is much stronger in the Years 5 and 6 class.
- I also looked at English and creative writing books in key stage 2. An author employed by the school is working regularly with pupils to support their creative writing and reading skills and to inspire them to become published authors. Year 6 pupils have produced some stunning creative writing. Teacher assessment indicates that all pupils reached age-related expectations in writing and many have reached greater depth this year. The work in English books in Years 5 and 6 was of a higher quality than that seen in Years 3 and 4, especially in terms of vocabulary, punctuation and sentence structure.
- The next line of enquiry I considered was the achievement of boys and girls in key stage 1 in reading, writing and mathematics. This is because in 2016, in contrast to the girls' above-average attainment, too few boys met the expected standards in reading, writing and mathematics and no boy reached a greater depth in any subject. The literacy and numeracy leaders are ensuring that these boys, now in Year 3, are receiving effective intervention support to diminish the differences in their achievement with that of the girls.
- Pupils in Years 1 and 2 are achieving well in reading, writing and mathematics. Work in pupils' books shows that most pupils are making good progress and completing tasks that are interesting to both boys and girls. Evidence of work in

other subjects shows a variety of exciting tasks, but pupils are not challenged as fully as they are in English and mathematics, to ensure that they make the best possible progress. Boys are achieving well this year, indicating that any gender issues are cohort related.

- Your teacher assessments for this academic year indicate improvement in reading standards at the end of key stage 1. Writing and mathematics results remain broadly similar to those in 2016. However, you have already identified that the proportion of pupils writing at greater depth is lower than last year.
- My third line of enquiry was to look at the teaching of phonics in key stage 1. This is because pupils' results in the year 1 phonics screening check for the past two years have been below the national average and in decline. Together, we observed the teaching of phonics. Pupils work in groups according to their needs. One group of pupils did not understand what they were learning and this led to some misconceptions, which were not always identified. Additionally, in all groups, pupils' understanding was not checked carefully enough to inform planning to ensure that future sessions meet the needs of pupils.
- Compared with the wealth of pupils' recorded work in other subjects, there was less evidence of pupils' learning and progress in these regular phonics sessions. Indications for pupils' attainment in the 2017 Year 1 phonics screening check are similar to those for the previous two years and you anticipate that they will be below the national average. Most pupils meet the required standard by the end of Year 2.
- My last line of enquiry was to check provision in the early years, which was an area for improvement at the previous inspection. You have ensured that, through effective training and support, leadership and teaching in all learning areas have improved. We observed the bright, stimulating learning environments inside and outside, with exciting opportunities to develop children's interest in learning. Children are making good progress from their various starting points. Attainment is above average, with a higher proportion of children currently achieving a good level of development.

Next steps for the school

Leaders and those responsible for governance should ensure that:

- they improve the teaching and learning of phonics in key stage 1 so that misconceptions are picked up quickly, and learning is frequently assessed so that pupils make the best possible progress
- teaching and learning are of a similarly high quality across the school, especially in Years 3 and 4, to ensure that pupils make the best possible progress in English, mathematics and other subjects over time.

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

Yours sincerely

Julie Harrison
Ofsted Inspector

Information about the inspection

- I met with you, other leaders and governors and spoke to a local authority representative on the telephone.
- Some Year 6 pupils read to me and I spoke with a group of pupils about their learning.
- I looked at a range of documentation, including information about the school's self-evaluation and plans for future improvement.
- I examined policies and procedures for the safeguarding of pupils, including the school's single central record of pre-employment checks.
- Together, we visited all classrooms to observe pupils' learning and scrutinise the work in pupils' books.
- The views of six staff, seven pupils and 33 parents who responded to Ofsted's online surveys were taken into account, as well as parents' views from the free-text service.