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Mr Shaun Walker
Blidworth Oaks Primary School
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Dear Mr Walker

Short inspection of Blidworth Oaks Primary School

Following my visit to the school on 27 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. Since that inspection there have been considerable changes in staffing but the workforce has now stabilised. Relationships across the school community are highly positive. You articulate the values of the school widely, and parents and pupils hold the school in high esteem. Parents I spoke with during the inspection were highly supportive of the team of committed staff and all felt that the school is well led.

Leaders have worked hard to create an atmosphere where all children are nurtured and can achieve their potential. The team spirit that you have developed is tangible. Teachers benefit from the school's partnership with a local teaching school alliance. A strong commitment to continuing professional development has enabled the school to grow through purposeful reflection and evaluation. The team is particularly enthusiastic about the opportunities to engage in coaching and mentoring which are on offer to all staff.

Pupils clearly enjoy coming to school and their levels of engagement in learning are high. You have established positive attitudes to learning through well-established routines. Pupils are keen to talk about their learning and are proud of their achievements. Together with members of the established leadership team, you have focused on improving the quality of teaching and learning throughout the school. Teachers plan a rich and varied curriculum that is focused on developing pupils' knowledge and skills and is appropriate to their age and stage of education.

The leader of the school's early years provision has created a rich and varied learning environment. Well-established routines enable children to focus on achieving the early learning goals. The introduction of the 'Little Acorns' unit for two-year-old children has been welcomed by parents and provides a multisensory space for developing communication and motor skills. Children achieve well because tasks are well planned. Challenging indoor and outdoor learning activities are helping rising proportions of children to reach a good level of development.

You have successfully tackled the areas for improvement identified in the previous inspection report by implementing a focused approach to the development of handwriting skills. Together with other leaders, you have also developed a rigorous system of quality assurance checks to ensure that teachers in all classes are focusing on pupils' presentation of their work. The introduction of extended writing books, alongside a range of initiatives designed to engage pupils in writing, has created a culture of resilience and aspiration in writing. You have also identified a number of opportunities to celebrate pupils' success in writing. These include half-termly topic-related 'big writes' and celebration assemblies that are highly valued by pupils and parents. As a result, pupils make good progress in writing and higher proportions of pupils in both key stages now reach the expected standard.

Together with other leaders, you have developed a clear system for providing pupils with feedback on their work. Use of checkpoint stickers provides pupils with a range of opportunities to move to the next step. Pupils welcome this personalised offer of support and challenge, and speak confidently about what they need to do next to improve their work.

Safeguarding is effective.

Leaders and governors place a high priority on all aspects of safeguarding. Arrangements are securely in place to promote a culture of vigilance and early response to identified issues. Rigorous checks are made on the suitability of all staff and volunteers to work with children. You have well-developed relationships with a range of professionals who are helping the school to keep pupils safe.

It is clear that you take great pride in knowing each pupil and his or her family well. You are tenacious in seeking the appropriate support for pupils who have additional behavioural or social needs. This high level of care for their children's welfare is highly valued by parents.

Training for staff and governors is regularly updated. This ensures that they all have an understanding and awareness of a full range of safeguarding issues, including risks from extremism, drug and alcohol misuse, and children missing from education. The school has a full range of policies designed to ensure that staff are confident in caring for children and promoting high standards of behaviour and conduct. As a result, pupils consider that their school is a safe and happy place.

Inspection findings

- Leaders have focused on improving the quality of teaching, learning and assessment. As a result, they hold teachers to account for the progress made by each pupil. A series of half-termly meetings are used to review each pupil's progress and refresh targets. However, leaders are not analysing the progress of specific groups of pupils in detail. Improving the outcomes of disadvantaged pupils, particularly the most able, is a particular priority for the school.
- Pupils' attainment is rising but teachers' expectations of what pupils can achieve are not yet high enough, particularly in mathematics.
- In the early years, children relish the range of well-planned learning activities including storytelling, role play and mark making. You have introduced a range of strategies to support families in helping their children to read at home using phonics. You are keen to further develop these opportunities for children to use phonics to ensure that they make the best possible progress from their starting points.
- In key stage 1, the proportions of pupils making the expected progress is rising. However, lessons do not always have sufficient pace and challenge, and this leads some pupils to disengage from their learning. Some teachers do not check for misconceptions and do not subsequently adjust their planning. As a result, not enough pupils achieve at greater depth.
- The outcomes of pupils in key stage 2 are improving, indicating that the school's investment in targeted training for teachers in English and mathematics is resulting in well-planned, effective teaching and learning.
- The range of initiatives introduced by the school to raise attainment in reading and writing are helping to shape a culture where communication skills are valued. However, leaders have not got a clear action plan for success in both reading and writing to ensure that standards continue to rise.
- The school is taking concerted action to maximise attendance to help it continue to raise standards further. The introduction of creative initiatives such as the 'big sleepover' is helping to motivate pupils.
- Senior leaders and the governing body have an accurate view of the school's performance. They use this to plan actions that are designed to improve the school further. The school development plans, however, are not currently precise enough to ensure that the governing body can hold leaders to account in a timely manner. They do not yet make it clear who is responsible for taking action and there are no milestones for either leaders or the governing body to use to evaluate the impact of actions taken on pupils' achievement.

Next steps for the school

Leaders and governors should ensure that:

- teachers raise their expectations of what pupils can achieve so that more pupils achieve greater depth in reading, writing and mathematics, especially in key stage 1
- analysis of pupils' progress includes closer scrutiny of key groups in order to ensure that teachers are more precisely addressing the needs of pupils, particularly of the most able disadvantaged pupils
- they sharpen the precision of planning for whole-school improvement by including milestones for success for each priority and making it clear who is responsible for taking action.

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

Yours sincerely

Emma Hollis-Brown
Ofsted Inspector

Information about the inspection

When we met at the start of this inspection, I shared with you the main areas of focus for the inspection. We discussed the changes to the school's context and the improvements that you have made since the last inspection. Prior to the inspection, I checked the school's website to ensure that it meets current requirements for the publication of documentation.

We subsequently carried out a learning walk together in the early years unit and in classrooms in key stage 1 to look closely at the quality of teaching and learning and, in particular, the progress pupils are making in reading and writing. Together with the deputy headteacher, we reviewed samples of pupils' work from both key stages and considered pupils' progress in reading, writing, mathematics and their work drawn from their topic studies.

I met with a group of pupils in Year 6 and we discussed their experience of school life. I observed pupils' behaviour and conduct around the school site and how pupils interacted at lunchtime. I met with four governors, including the chair of the governing body and two parent governors. I also met with middle leaders and reviewed a range of school documentation and planning, including the school development plans.

We discussed a range of aspects of the safeguarding work of the school, scrutinised school documentation and reviewed records of checks on the suitability of staff and volunteers to work with children.

I considered 19 responses to Ofsted's online questionnaire, Parent View, and reviewed the responses of staff and pupils to questionnaires completed during the inspection. I also spoke with parents as they dropped children off at the start of the school day.