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Mrs Helen Morrall
Headteacher
The Avenue Infant School
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Dear Mrs Morrall

Short inspection of The Avenue Infant School

Following my visit to the school on 10 October 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 April 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 have brought about considerable change since taking up post two years ago. You have used your clear understanding of effective teaching and learning to successfully build forward from an established ethos of care and nurture. Staff, pupils and parents hold you in high regard and are actively engaged in the school's sharper focus on learning.

You have ensured that governors are well informed. They use this information well to work closely with school leaders to monitor performance and challenge the school to improve pupils' outcomes.

Leaders have had an ongoing focus to continually improve teaching since the last inspection. You have successfully managed a number of teaching staff changes and particularly used these opportunities to strengthen leadership and subject expertise. For example, the new deputy headteacher was immediately instrumental in securing improvements in Year 2 mathematics outcomes at the end of 2017. She is now effectively guiding improvements in progression in mathematics across year groups.

Leaders have ensured that effective training for all staff is linked to whole-school developments. This has enabled the school to respond well to changing national demands and secured improved attainment in Year 2 to be at least in line with

national averages in reading and mathematics. To sustain improved progress and attainment, especially for disadvantaged pupils and the high proportion of pupils who speak English as an additional language, you have identified that all adults need to consistently adapt tasks more precisely to move on learning.

There is a harmonious family atmosphere that is valued by parents and pupils. The strong values and respect for all pupils' ethnic backgrounds ensure that all feel equally valued. Pupils say they enjoy their learning and are particularly enthusiastic about doing jobs and going on fun trips. Pupils cooperate happily together, in the welcoming, well-resourced environment. Staff are proud to work at The Avenue Infant School. Attractive large-scale collaborative art celebrates the school's inclusive values.

Safeguarding is effective.

All staff are committed to the safeguarding and welfare of pupils. You have ensured appropriate training for all staff. Staff have a secure understanding of their responsibilities and all staff are confident to report any concerns they have about children's welfare. Records are detailed and of a high quality, which ensures that you can work constructively with outside agencies. The family support worker helps you in working sensitively with families that need help. You ensure that you make timely referrals to outside agencies and are persistent in securing the necessary help.

All parents who were spoken to and responded to the Ofsted online survey agreed that their children are safe and happy and highly value the welcoming and nurturing ethos. Pupils say they feel safe and that adults listen to them and act quickly to sort out any problems.

Inspection findings

- You have ensured, through appropriate training and well-understood policies, that staff across the school are becoming more consistent in their approaches. You provide useful opportunities for staff to collaborate and share practice with other schools. This is securing consistently good teaching across the school.
- Teachers and pupils have positive relationships. Classrooms and learning spaces are attractive, making best use of available space. Displays celebrate pupils' work and provide helpful prompts of how to make their work better. Pupils enjoy interesting topics, such as 'food glorious food' and 'dead or alive'. Teachers have used these well, particularly to improve science knowledge and skills, leading to a significant improvement in attainment to just above national averages. Leaders are continuing to support all staff to ensure that they are optimising opportunities to develop a wide range of subject knowledge and skills, especially to improve language and writing outcomes.
- You have introduced a range of well-researched systems to ensure that monitoring and evaluation are leading to sharper identification of pupils' needs. This increased rigour led to significant improvements in progress for disadvantaged pupils in 2017, particularly in reading and mathematics. However,

this information is not being used equally precisely and skilfully across all year groups and by all adults to move pupils' learning forward consistently.

- The vast majority of children start Reception with skills below those typical for their age. Caring early years staff ensure that children settle quickly and that parents feel confident that their children are looked after well. Together, we saw that children were engrossed in a wide range of engaging, hands-on activities. However, adults do not consistently draw out the language and learning opportunities that activities present.
- You have used effective induction and information sharing to prepare your new leadership team. This means they have been swiftly able to contribute to identified actions for improvement to continue to move the school forward.

Next steps for the school

Leaders and those responsible for governance should ensure that:

- teachers and supporting adults precisely adapt tasks to secure intended learning to further accelerate the progress for different pupils
- early years staff consistently draw out the learning from well-chosen activities to develop pupils' language and literacy skills further in readiness for Year 1.

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

Yours sincerely

Mandy Wilding
Ofsted Inspector

Information about the inspection

During the inspection, I met with you and shared my key lines of enquiry. I also met with the newly appointed deputy headteacher, the leader for early years and the English leader. I met with some governors and spoke to the chair of the governing body. I also spoke to a representative of the local authority. You and I visited all classes and talked with pupils to evaluate the quality of their learning. We also looked at a sample of pupils' books within lessons and from the last academic year. I listened to pupils reading and spoke with a group of pupils. In addition, I scrutinised a range of the school's documents, including those relating to the progress of pupils, the school's improvement planning, its self-evaluation and documents relating to safeguarding. I spoke with 20 parents at the start of the school day and took account of the 10 responses to Parent View, Ofsted's online survey, and the nine responses from parents to Ofsted's free-text service. I also considered the six responses to Ofsted's online staff survey. There were no responses from pupils to Ofsted's online survey to take into consideration.