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Mrs Rebecca Steed
Principal
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Dear Mrs Steed

Short inspection of Cedar Road Primary School

Following my visit to the school on 14 November 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 November 2014.

This school continues to be good.

The leadership team has maintained the good quality of education in the school since the last inspection.

The school has experienced a time of significant change to the leadership team over recent years. The headteacher retired in 2016 and the trust experienced some difficulty appointing a successor. During that time, the trust ensured that the acting deputy headteacher was supported by two experienced headteachers, including yourself. At the time, you were the principal at another academy but you supported the acting deputy headteacher, on a part-time basis, to fulfil his leadership duties. From April 2017, you increased the amount of time you were involved with supporting the school's leadership team. In September 2017, you took up your substantive post as full-time principal at Cedar Road Primary. You have restructured the leadership team so that phase leaders for the early years, key stage 1 and key stage 2 now form the senior leadership team alongside you and the deputy headteacher.

During this time of change, the leadership continued to ensure that the school provided a good quality of education. For example, initiatives to improve pupils' reading and to support the effective teaching of mathematics were implemented. Published assessment information for 2016 and provisional information for 2017 show that, by the end of Year 6, pupils achieved standards that were at least in line with those seen nationally in mathematics. They also exceeded those seen nationally in reading and writing. Pupils, by the end of Year 6, made progress that

was in the top 10% of that seen nationally in reading in 2016 and in the top 20% in writing in 2017. They were very well prepared to start secondary school.

Since your arrival, you have not wasted a moment. You have further raised the expectations that staff have of what pupils can achieve. You and your leadership team have an accurate view of the strengths of the school and the current priorities for development. This allows you to plan for future improvements in detail. Your leadership team appreciates your clear direction. Team members also appreciate your willingness to listen to their ideas and contributions and the freedom they have to innovate within the structures you provide.

The school has a calm and purposeful atmosphere. Pupils were keen to talk to me about their work and their school. As we toured the school together, we saw that pupils listen carefully to each other during lessons and pupils of all ages showed a genuine interest in what others were doing. The majority of parents spoke positively about the school. You encourage parents to come into school each term to meet with their child's teacher and find out about their child's learning for that term. You have invited parents to meet you and your leadership team at a 'coffee morning'. More of these events are planned so that as many parents as possible are able to attend.

At the time of the last inspection, the leadership team was asked to make some improvements to the quality of teaching. During our tour of classrooms, and as we looked at books, we could see that teachers provide pupils with opportunities to write at length across a range of subjects. The new curriculum, which you have recently introduced, is providing opportunities for pupils to make strong links in their learning. For example, pupils use the skills they learn in spelling, punctuation and grammar as they write in different subjects, such as history, geography or science. Pupils' books and displays around school celebrate the breadth of the curriculum. We also saw that teachers provide pupils with work that is well matched to their ability. Teachers have recently added an additional task to provide a challenge for pupils who are ready to be moved on even further in most lessons. We also noticed, however, that in mathematics, teachers are not reliably moving pupils on to work that is closely matched to their ability quickly enough during lessons. You have recently introduced a new approach to teaching mathematics in order to address this and you recognise that this needs to be applied more thoroughly by some teachers.

You have rightly identified that the attendance of pupils eligible for free school meals is too low and the progress they make is not as strong as it could be. You have made improving the outcomes and attendance of these pupils a key priority for the school. The deputy headteacher has recently strengthened the procedure for allocating, and checking on, the pupil premium funding. This process is much more detailed than it has been previously. It allows him to check more carefully that pupils who are entitled to the funding are benefiting from it. It is too early to judge whether this will lead to improved outcomes, but early indications are that the attendance of these pupils so far this year is higher than it was during the last academic year.

Pupils understand the school's values. They confidently told me what 'integrity', 'respect' and 'compassion' mean. They understand that developing these important values is preparing them well for adult life.

Pupils can take part in a raft of experiences to enhance their learning. Alongside day trips and residential visits, they can learn to play musical instruments, sing in the choir or represent the school at sporting events. Cedar Road has had great success, winning the 'Summer Cup' at the David Ross Education Trust sporting festival. This event involved over 1,400 pupils and students from across the trust in the summer term 2017.

Safeguarding is effective.

The leadership team has ensured that the safeguarding arrangements are fit for purpose.

You ensure that the necessary vetting checks are undertaken for staff and for volunteers who come into school. You have improved the security of the school building since your arrival. Pupils told me that the new 'buttons on the doors' help to keep them safe. They know they should not press the button and allow someone into school.

You ensure that staff have the most up to date training. They know how to raise a concern about a child's welfare, should one arise. Your designated safeguarding leads, including the family support worker, ensure that records are well kept. You call upon external support for parents where this may be helpful.

Pupils are taught how to keep themselves safe. They enjoy visits from the NSPCC, for example, who teach pupils how to keep themselves safe in a variety of situations. Pupils told me that bullying was very rare, but they were confident that they had a trusted adult who they could tell, if it ever did occur, secure in the knowledge it would be dealt with successfully for them. Pupils have an understanding, in a way that is appropriate for their age, about how to be safe when they use modern technology.

Inspection findings

- The leadership team has introduced an approach to improving pupils' writing. In books, we saw that pupils write at length on a regular basis and in a range of subjects. Pupils' books showed that they make strong progress from their different starting points. We could see that even from the start of this year, pupils are writing more complex sentences. Many pupils are also using punctuation more accurately than they were in September. By the end of 2017, provisional information showed that the proportion of pupils achieving the expected standard and the proportion achieving the higher standard in writing by the end of Year 6 were greater than had been seen in 2016.
- The local governing body is aware of its responsibilities. You have its full support.

Governors appreciate the transparency with which you approach your work with them. This is encouraging them to ask even more challenging questions of the leadership team. They come into school to see it in action for themselves. They have plans afoot to schedule their visits in a more focused way so that they can be even better informed about the work of the school.

- You encourage teachers to improve their practice. Teachers who are new to the profession are well supported and receive important training in this early stage of their career. Other teachers are encouraged to visit neighbouring schools to see strong practice which they can bring back to Cedar Road to share with colleagues.
- Pupils were keen to tell me that at Cedar Road, pupils make good friends. They enjoy the responsibilities they can take, such as being a librarian, representing their classmates on the school council or being a corridor monitor at lunchtime. Leaders provide pupils with opportunities to become involved with the local community. Pupils sing at the local home for the elderly and welcomed the residents into school for afternoon tea. Pupils had the responsibility of making their visitors welcome and serving the tea. Pupils with whom I spoke were respectful of those whose beliefs or lifestyles may be different to their own, declaring confidently, 'We are all unique!'

Next steps for the school

Leaders and those responsible for governance should ensure that:

- they further refine the use of pupil premium funding so that outcomes and attendance for this group of pupils rise rapidly
- teachers embed the new approach to teaching mathematics so that pupils make even more progress than they already do.

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

Yours sincerely

Di Mullan
Her Majesty's Inspector

Information about the inspection

During the inspection, I met with you, the deputy headteacher, two phase leaders and two teachers who are new to the profession. I also held meetings with four members of the local governing body, including the chair, and the academy improvement leader from the David Ross Education Trust. I met formally with a group of eight pupils and spoke with many more informally in class. I considered the views of parents through the 106 responses to the online survey, Parent View,

and spoke with several parents as they brought their children to school in the morning.

You and I toured the school to see the learning taking place in every year group. Together with the deputy headteacher, we examined pupils' books from across the school.

I examined a range of documentation. This included the school's self-evaluation and school improvement plans, documentation relating to the safeguarding of pupils and information relating to the progress pupils make.