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Mrs Sarah Mellors
Headteacher
Scartho Infants' School and Nursery
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Dear Mrs Mellors

Short inspection of Scartho Infants' School and Nursery

Following my visit to the school on 17 January 2018, 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.

Based on the evidence gathered during this short inspection, I have identified some priorities for improvement which I advise the school to address. In light of these priorities, the school's next inspection will be a full section 5 inspection. **There is no change to the school's current overall effectiveness grade of good as a result of this inspection.**

Following the school's last inspection, leaders were asked to strengthen further the good leadership and management to increase the pace of improvement. Since your appointment in September 2016, you have put in place or reinforced a number of systems and procedures to address the changes in the national curriculum and related assessments. The majority of parents and carers are happy with the quality of education their children receive, with a very large proportion being particularly positive that their children are happy and safe in school. Many appreciate being able to start the day's learning with their children in the classroom, with the opportunity to speak informally with staff. This provides a positive and calm start to the day for everyone.

As a priority, you have worked with the local authority assessment consultant in implementing an effective assessment system that records the progress pupils are making from their entry to the school. You have supported staff in making accurate judgements of pupils' attainment in relation to the national age-related expectations. This work has resulted in an improved understanding among school leaders, staff and governors of where any underperformance lies. You demonstrate how weaknesses in pupils' progress are now being more quickly identified and how work has started to address the gaps that some pupils have in their learning.

The last inspection also directed leaders to ensure that they have regular opportunities to check on how well pupils learn in lessons. While you have undertaken some checks on lessons and pupils' work, you acknowledge that these need to be more frequent and focused to ensure that leaders have an accurate view of teaching and learning across the school. You agree that this will help you to identify where support and direction is most needed in teaching.

After inspectors highlighted pupils' learning of sounds as an area for improvement at their last visit, some initial improvement was seen in the phonics standard at the end of Year 1. However, results in Year 1 have declined steadily over the last three years and results were below the national average in 2017. Pupils' learning in lessons and work in their books show that this is a priority for improvement, as you have identified in your development plan. Although sounds are used accurately by adults, there is little emphasis on pupils saying, repeating and becoming confident in applying new sounds they have learned. The teaching of phonics across the school is not systematic. It is not always well matched to pupils' needs, particularly for those who find phonics and reading difficult.

The leader for phonics has devised some systems to improve outcomes in phonics. For example, expectations have been raised for the early years children, because new leaders know the importance of an early start to phonics. Consequently, Reception children now have a structured phonics session each day. An assessment plan has been implemented, which clearly identifies the expectations in the standards that pupils should achieve by the end of each term. Some checks on the effectiveness of new structures have started to take place, but leaders agree that this needs to be given greater priority so that there can be a better understanding of what aspects of phonics delivery most need support through training or direction. Positively, reading is high profile in school: pupils have many opportunities to read aloud throughout the week and story time is an important part of the day.

Leaders have worked alongside office staff to promote pupils' good attendance, as school attendance was lower than the national average in 2015 and 2016. Office staff make daily checks on absence and provide you with monthly overviews of which pupils and groups of pupils are persistently absent from school. This has helped you direct your positive incentives for good attendance, and inform parents where attendance is not good enough. As a result, pupils' attendance was better than the national average in 2017. Attendance has dipped again slightly in the autumn term 2017, and you know that you need to keep working with parents to instil the importance of good attendance.

Safeguarding is effective.

Leaders have made sure that safeguarding practices are fit for purpose. Records for pupils who may be at risk are detailed and checked regularly by the safeguarding lead teachers. Leaders continually refine the systems they have in place to make sure that everyone knows the high importance of safeguarding and that it is everyone's responsibility. This starts with thorough procedures for the recruitment of new staff, including careful checks supported by the local authority, and well-

planned induction procedures.

Adults teach pupils how to keep safe through regular assemblies and lessons as well as visits from the police community support officers. Pupils I spoke to during my visit confidently described how they had recently learned how to cross the road safely. They were able to explain why they learn about and practice ways to keep safe, such as having regular fire safety practises. Pupils say that everyone behaves well, and that they know to speak to an adult if they are worried about anything.

Inspection findings

- A focus during my visit was finding out the reasons for the decline in standards at the end of key stage 1 in 2017. You and governors explain that you were very disappointed with these results. The proportion of pupils reaching the expected and higher standards in reading, writing and mathematics was lower than the national averages. You know that the progress pupils make through their time in school is not strong enough and that considerable improvement is needed. Some actions that leaders and teachers are taking to address this are starting to come through in pupils' work. For example, the direction pupils are given to edit and improve their own work, correcting and upgrading punctuation, spelling and language, is having a positive effect on the progress they are making in writing. However, pupils throughout school are not consistently given sufficient opportunities to write across a wide variety of tasks and in different styles. Sometimes pupils are not engaged in their lessons or confident about what is expected of them. Some essential learning time is lost at the start and end of lessons.
- In mathematics, leaders have started to use different strategies and resources to support teachers in planning and delivering lessons that give pupils opportunities to talk about their learning and apply their skills. Partnerships with a mathematics consultant and the junior school are supporting this work. The quality of pupils' work is currently varied across school. Leaders agree that it is not clear by looking at pupils' work, in some classes, whether or not they are having opportunities to be successful in a wide variety of learning in mathematics. Pupils have some opportunities to solve problems, but most teachers do not extend this to encouraging pupils to select skills they will apply to tasks and give reasons for their choices. Leaders have not checked pupils' work themselves this year and agree that more frequent checks on pupils' progress in their work are needed.
- Changes to the curriculum have been focused on engagement and enjoyment. Responses from pupils and parents show that in this respect the new curriculum has been successful: both groups comment about the fun activities that are taking place. In addition, vibrant displays celebrate learning in various subjects across school. However, although middle leaders have not formally checked on the learning taking place, or on pupils' work, they have noticed, through discussions with colleagues, that the coverage of subjects and progression of skills have been affected by the removal of a set curriculum plan. They are right. We agreed that leaders need to check that the national curriculum objectives are being met and that teachers plan for a progression of skills across the curriculum

as pupils move through school.

- Governors explain how there has been a review of arrangements, improvements to systems in place and a better understanding of where strengths and weaknesses lie. They are able to identify some of the recent positive changes that have taken place to address the weaker standards seen in phonics and at the end of key stage 1. However, they do not have enough information, or they have not asked sufficiently probing questions, to check on the quality of teaching and how leaders are making sure that it improves. They have a good understanding of their responsibility in checking that leaders have created a culture of safeguarding and carry out their work in this area well.
- You worked with a school leadership consultant on your appointment. In addition, you have worked closely with the local authority assessment consultant to put some essential systems in place. Other school improvement support has been more limited, but the authority has brokered an audit with the possibility of further support from a school improvement partner later this term. You and governors are keen to have this support in validating your judgements and providing further support and challenge for improvement.

Next steps for the school

Leaders and those responsible for governance should ensure that:

- teaching in phonics improves to be systematic and well matched to pupils' needs, so that pupils of all abilities make improved progress in their reading and writing
- they continue work started in mathematics to encourage pupils to apply their number skills to a wide variety of tasks, and give reasons for their methods
- senior and middle leaders make frequent checks on the quality of teaching and learning, evaluating the effectiveness of the new systems and strategies they put into place, and checking the progress being made by pupils across the curriculum
- governors receive and use information provided by school leaders and external partners to appropriately support and challenge school leaders about the progress and attainment of pupils
- teachers make every moment count in lessons so that pupils are fully engaged in learning and making accelerated progress.

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

Yours sincerely

Kate Rowley
Her Majesty's Inspector

Information about the inspection

During the inspection, we spent time together in classrooms and looking at the quality of pupils' work. We discussed leaders' evaluations of the school's strengths and areas for improvement. The deputy headteacher joined us for some of these discussions. We looked at the success of the actions that leaders have taken. I held discussions with members of your governing body and had a separate meeting with the local authority school assessment consultant. I met with leaders for English, phonics, mathematics and computing. I spoke to pupils about their learning and listened to pupils read. I spoke to parents before school started and took into account the 31 responses to Ofsted's online questionnaire, Parent View. The responses from staff to the Ofsted questionnaires were also considered. I reviewed a number of school documents, including the written evaluation of the school's work, documents relating to checks on the quality of teaching and learning, school assessment information, analyses of attendance, a range of policies and safeguarding information.