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Mrs Lynne McMulkin  
Headteacher  
Denbigh Primary School  
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Luton  
Bedfordshire  
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Dear Mrs McMulkin

### **Short inspection of Denbigh Primary School**

Following my visit to the school on 31 January 2018 with Jane Crow, Ofsted Inspector, 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 2013.

#### **This school continues to be good.**

The leadership team has maintained the good quality of education in the school since the last inspection. Based on the evidence gathered during this short inspection, I am of the opinion that the school has demonstrated strong practice and marked improvement in certain areas. This may indicate that the school is improving towards being outstanding. Therefore, I am recommending that the school's next inspection be a section 5 inspection.

Through our discussions, it became quickly apparent that for you and the governing body, senior leaders and staff, it is the pupils who are at the heart of everything you do at Denbigh Primary School. The culture you have created is one of high expectations, which maximises the chances for all of your pupils to succeed. You and your leadership team have the overwhelming support of parents, carers, staff members and the pupils themselves.

Classroom visits show the school to be a very happy and industrious place. In every classroom, pupils are fully engaged in an interesting variety of activities carefully planned by teachers to meet the needs of all groups of pupils. Staff and pupils strive to meet the high expectations you have set for them. Not a second of learning time is wasted. In Reception, children are read to while they enjoy their breaktime snacks and older pupils reach for a book at every opportunity to continue reading for pleasure.

Children arrive in Reception with starting points below the national average. Because of knowledgeable leadership and effective teaching, children make rapid

progress. As a result, the proportion of them reaching a good level of development by the end of their Reception year is in line with other schools nationally.

The impact of strong teaching continues as, for the last three years, an above-average proportion of your Year 1 pupils have reached the expected standard in the phonics screening test. By the end of key stage 1 in 2017, an above-average proportion of your pupils also reached the expected standard in reading, writing and mathematics. The progress your pupils made between key stage 1 and key stage 2 in reading and mathematics was above the national average in 2017 resulting in a higher proportion of them reaching at least the expected standard in reading, writing and mathematics than in other schools nationally.

Pupils are welcoming and speak enthusiastically about their school, their teachers and their lessons. Pupils enjoy school and so their attendance is good. Their behaviour in lessons and around the school is exemplary. Pupils can explain how they learn about both their rights and their responsibilities as citizens. They celebrate their cultural diversity through, for example, the observation of Eid, the Chinese New Year, St Patrick's Day and Easter. The school is a harmonious place with positive relationships among pupils and between staff and pupils.

Your processes to evaluate the school's strengths and areas for further improvement are precise and accurate. This is one of the reasons why the school is on an improving trajectory. At our first meeting, you explained clearly the school's many strengths, as well as the priorities for development. You are, for example, well aware that the quality of pupils' writing across the curriculum is not yet as good as other areas of the school's work. Any new strategies you introduce to raise standards are always informed by research and supported with relevant training.

Outcomes in reading have improved because you placed books at the very centre of your curriculum and ensured that pupils are exposed to high-quality and challenging texts. You have now done the same with writing, expanding the opportunities pupils have to write in different styles and for different purposes across the whole of the curriculum. For this to be effective, you expect teachers to fully prepare pupils for writing. For example, before Year 2 pupils wrote from the viewpoint of someone who was trapped in a tunnel, the teacher darkened the classroom and asked pupils to think about the sounds, the smells and the feeling of being in a small dark place. The resulting writing was full of rich vocabulary and atmosphere.

### **Safeguarding is effective.**

Leaders have ensured that all safeguarding arrangements are fit for purpose including ensuring that all procedures for the safe recruitment of staff are robust. Pupils say that they feel safe at school, and parents wholeheartedly agree that their children are safe and well looked after at school. Pupils are confident that staff would support them should they have any concerns. Your staff are well trained to identify vulnerable pupils and your curriculum offers many opportunities for pupils to understand how to stay safe, including when online or using social media.

The designated safeguarding leader ensures that all arrangements for safeguarding and for pupils' welfare are rigorous and kept under continuous review. He also maintains effective links with external agencies. Relationships with parents are good and the school provides practical help to families in order to support pupils' academic, physical and emotional needs.

## **Inspection findings**

- At our first meeting, we agreed several key lines of enquiry to ascertain whether the school remained at least good. With your senior leaders, you outlined the marked improvement that had been achieved in several areas. I was able to check this out during the day. In particular, you and your governors have invested heavily in the training and development of your teaching staff.
- Improvements in outcomes for pupils since the previous inspection are a result of these well-researched, carefully planned and fully resourced developments in the quality of teaching. For example, the progress of pupils who speak English as an additional language has accelerated because all of your teaching staff are specifically trained in this area. Four of your teachers are trained mathematics specialists and have used this training to develop the skills of others. A high quality of teaching was evident in all classrooms during the inspection.
- You and your senior leaders monitor teaching rigorously to ensure that standards are consistent across the school, not only, for example, in behaviour but also in the strategies teachers use to help pupils to learn. For example, the previous inspection report highlighted the need for pupils to develop the skills needed to work independently. The way you have approached this is by training staff to build opportunities for talk and collaboration into lessons to build the confidence of pupils before they settle down to independent work.
- One of my lines of enquiry during my visit was to look at how well you are meeting the needs of your most-able pupils. The proportion of pupils who reached the higher standards by the end of both key stage 1 and key stage 2 in 2016 was below national averages. There were improvements in all areas in 2017. At the end of key stage 1 national tests, the proportion of pupils who achieved greater depth in mathematics was similar to other schools nationally although reading and writing still lagged slightly behind.
- At key stage 2, the proportion of your pupils achieving the higher standard in reading and mathematics was close to the national average although still below in writing. Work in the books of your most-able pupils in Year 2 and Year 6 demonstrate that more pupils currently are developing the skills they need to reach this standard. This supports your assertion that in 2018 there is a further rise in the achievement of your most-able pupils.
- As well as the most able pupils, I also discussed with you the improvements there have been over the last two years in outcomes for other key groups of pupils such as your disadvantaged pupils and boys. All pupils are set ambitious targets which they are expected to achieve and any pupils who are identified as needing extra help to meet these targets receive support to do so. However, it is the diet of effective daily teaching that makes most difference to these pupils.

- Between key stage 1 and key stage 2, your Year 6 disadvantaged pupils in 2017 made stronger progress in reading and mathematics than other pupils nationally. However, not enough disadvantaged pupils are reaching the higher standard in reading, writing and mathematics. Boys have far lower starting points than girls when they begin key stage 1. Their progress accelerates as they move through the school and they are rapidly catching up with the girls in reading and writing by the time they leave in Year 6. In mathematics, more boys than girls reached the higher standard for the first time in 2017. Compared to other boys nationally, boys at Denbigh perform as well or better by the end of key stage 2.
- Finally, I looked at the quality of the school's curriculum. It is designed to develop pupils' understanding of the world and introduce them to many new experiences through fun activities and opportunities for practical learning. Pupils speak enthusiastically of the opportunities they have, both in lessons and in activities that take them out of school, to broaden their experience of the world. Pupils take part in projects with school pupils in places such as Sri Lanka and Poland. Trips to sporting events such as the Women's Cricket World Cup and participation in the annual Shakespeare Festival for Schools expose pupils to a wide variety of British culture.
- The learning environment in school reflects this rich culture with vibrant and lively displays celebrating the work and experiences of the pupils. As well as trips and visits linked to the curriculum, pupils also benefit from a range of optional activities before, during and after school which include drama, music, cookery, art and sport.
- Every part of the curriculum at Denbigh contributes to the development of literacy and numeracy. For example, sport has a very high profile and successfully develops pupils' physical skills and promotes their well-being. Physical education lessons are planned to specifically broaden pupils' vocabulary, give them opportunities to apply mathematical skills and provide rich material to stimulate their writing. The curriculum prepares pupils extremely well for the demands of secondary school.

### **Next steps for the school**

Leaders and those responsible for governance should ensure that:

- outcomes for your most-able pupils, including your most-able disadvantaged pupils continue to rise, especially in writing, so that more of them reach the high standards of which they are capable.

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

Yours sincerely

Lesley Daniel  
**Ofsted Inspector**

### **Information about the inspection**

During the inspection, I spoke with you and all members of your senior leadership team. I met with two members of the governing body and a representative from the local authority.

Senior leaders joined inspectors on visits to classrooms, where we looked at pupils' work and talked to them about their learning.

Inspectors also met with two groups of pupils from Year 2 and Year 6.

I considered the 20 responses to Ofsted's online questionnaire for parents, Parent View, and the school's own parent, staff and pupil surveys as well as the views of parents who contacted Ofsted individually during the inspection.

I examined the school's documentation, including the school's improvement plan, your own review of the school's effectiveness, and information relating to safeguarding and pupils' progress.