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Mr Robert Howell
Headteacher
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Dear Mr Howell

Short inspection of Alfred Sutton Primary School

Following my visit to the school on 30 January 2018 with Barbara Carr, 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 October 2012.

This school continues to be good.

The leadership team has maintained the good quality of education in the school since the last inspection. You joined the school in 2016, on the retirement of the previous headteacher. Since then, you, your leaders and governors have worked diligently to improve standards and several other aspects of the school. Parents are overwhelmingly positive about the school. They cite the strong community spirit that you have created, and praise especially the care and support adults provide for pupils.

Pupils are very proud of their school. Classrooms are typically studious and calm, and there is a harmonious atmosphere throughout the school. Pupils behave very well. They play happily together at playtimes, and cooperate well with each other in lessons. Pupils told me that they especially love learning, because teachers are dedicated and make it really clear what pupils need to do to edit and improve their work. They also like the opportunities you provide for them to hold responsibilities, such as being corridor monitor, or voicing views in the school council. Trips to places of interest, like the recent visit to test their DNA in a science laboratory, or singing at the O2 in London, also featured prominently in the list of things pupils like about the school.

At the last inspection, the inspectors asked for an improvement in the governance of the school. Governors have responded well to this, ensuring that they use their broad range of skills suitably to monitor leaders' work. Governors interrogate performance information especially well. They successfully hold you and your leaders to account for pupils' achievements, asking insightful questions to ensure

that additional funding is spent appropriately. They are, consequently, knowledgeable about the school's strengths and any areas for development, and contribute supportively to the school's continued improvement.

You and your very able deputy headteacher have set out clear systems and expectations to make sure that the quality of teaching across the school is consistently strong. Your recently strengthened leadership team is well placed to oversee the changes you are making to the school. Leaders are well trained in monitoring and evaluating the impact of their work. Staff feel supported by leaders, and they recognise the positive changes made to the school. They feel valued and show a genuine desire to make sure, constantly, that pupils achieve highly. As one teacher said, 'It's a joy to be involved in the school's improvement programme.'

As a result of the very effective leadership of the school, by you and your deputy, standards have risen rapidly over the last two years. Last year, pupils at the end of key stage 2 made above-average progress in reading. Their progress in writing and mathematics was well above average. Pupils at the end of key stage 1 also made strong progress to achieve standards in line with, and sometimes above, national averages. Standards in the early years and in Year 1 have improved consistently over time. Last year, above-average proportions of pupils reached the expected standard of the phonics screening check in Year 1, and achieved a good level of development at the end of Reception.

During the inspection, you were able to provide evidence to show that current pupils are making similarly strong progress. The quality of writing for pupils in key stage 1 is a particular strength, with pupils able to use their technical skills to produce interesting and informative work. Reading is also a strength. Pupils especially enjoy discussing the class texts you have purchased. Several pupils told me that mathematics is their favourite subject. You have reorganised how mathematics is taught, so that pupils make better progress than they have in the past. Pupils are able to engage in using visual models and images to help them develop fluency in mathematics. However, we identified that the approach to problem-solving and reasoning across the school is not consistent.

You recognise that some pupils do not attend school regularly enough. You carefully investigate the individual barriers a pupil may have to attending school regularly, and work well with families to remove those barriers. Pupils are rewarded for high attendance and you ensure a calm start to the day for specific pupils who need it. You have also raised awareness with parents about the impact time off can have on pupils' learning and welfare. All this is working, so that the number of pupils persistently absent is falling and pupils' overall attendance is improving.

Safeguarding is effective.

The leadership team has ensured that all safeguarding arrangements are fit for purpose. Leaders and governors have made sure that recruitment procedures are robust and that staff training in child protection is thorough. Staff are dedicated to making sure that pupils are safe. They know how to recognise potential concerns and speak confidently about how to report them. Leaders have developed strong

relationships with parents and outside agencies, so that any additional support that pupils may need is provided. Pupils say that they feel safe in school and are confident that an adult will help them if they have any worries. Teachers help pupils to understand how to stay safe in their community, for example when crossing roads and riding bicycles. E-safety awareness has a high priority in school. Pupils know not to speak to strangers online, and know the importance of reporting anything that they see online which makes them feel uncomfortable.

Inspection findings

- Over time, the progress of disadvantaged pupils has improved, so that for current pupils there are no noticeable differences in the quality of work between disadvantaged pupils and others in school. Leaders make good use of pupil premium funding to ensure that pupils are taught consistently well throughout the school. Teachers identify precisely what pupils know, understand and can do, and make sure that their planning includes addressing any misconceptions quickly. Governors monitor the impact of funding and, with leaders, fine-tune approaches to make sure that individual pupils are making continued good progress. This has been particularly successful for pupils learning phonics, so that last year disadvantaged pupils in Year 1 achieved similar standards to those seen nationally.
- Pupils are very well prepared for life in modern Britain. They have developed a set of values, known as the 'Sutton Six', which permeate the school. This term's focus, of 'aspiration', was spoken of repeatedly by pupils. For example, one told me that she aspires to 'have a positive mindset' which will help her to keep going when work gets hard. Personal, social and health education is a key part of the curriculum. It is helping pupils to have a positive outlook and to be more resilient. Pupils understand the importance of treating people equally and that it is 'okay' to be different. They told me that pupils do not use racist or homophobic language, because that would be wrong. They were very clear that the school is a friendly place and that bullying is rare. They also reported that should anyone fall out with their friend, an adult would help, but that pupils are increasingly able to sort things out for themselves.
- Your effective subject leaders make sure that the curriculum is broad, balanced and is increasingly a strength. They support their colleagues well in preparing work which allows pupils to develop knowledge, skills and understanding across the whole curriculum. Music is especially popular with pupils. They like the opportunities to learn an instrument and to perform in public. In history, pupils studying the Bayeux Tapestry could demonstrate their knowledge of how Norman and English soldiers used different fighting techniques during the Battle of Hastings. In science, pupils studying circuits could predict which was likely to work. In mathematics, pupils work hard and with increasing confidence. However, leaders recognise that some further refining of the mathematics curriculum is needed to ensure that pupils develop excellent problem-solving skills.
- An additional focus during the inspection was on early years. Leadership in the early years is effective and having a positive impact on children's learning.

Leaders have made several improvements to the learning environment, especially outdoors, so that children learn well across the whole curriculum. Leaders have made sure that adults are well trained in supporting children's good progress, for example through using questions skilfully to help children express their thinking. Children enter the early years with skills typically below those of children nationally, yet, because of effective teaching and leadership, above-average proportions reach a good level of development and are well prepared for entering key stage 1.

Next steps for the school

Leaders and those responsible for governance should ensure that:

- pupils' attendance continues to improve
- approaches to teaching mathematics are refined, ensuring that pupils develop excellent problem-solving skills.

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

Yours sincerely

Catherine Old
Her Majesty's Inspector

Information about the inspection

During the inspection, inspectors met with you, senior leaders, other staff, governors, pupils and a representative from the local authority. Inspectors observed 13 lessons across all key stages, most of these jointly with senior leaders. Inspectors spoke to pupils during lessons, playtimes and met formally with two groups of pupils. Inspectors scrutinised a range of pupils' work. They spoke to parents in the morning and considered the 55 responses to Ofsted's online survey, Parent View, including the 39 free-text responses. The team also considered the 47 survey responses submitted by pupils and the 39 submitted by staff. Inspectors reviewed a range of school documentation relating to governance, behaviour and attendance, safeguarding and monitoring records.