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David Oldham
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Dear Mr Oldham

Short inspection of Drayton CofE Junior School

Following my visit to the school on 31 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 March 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 took up the position of headteacher in September 2016 following the retirement of the long-standing headteacher. Several changes to the governing body have also taken place since the previous inspection, with a new chair being appointed in December 2015. It is to your credit that, during a time of some considerable change, the staff body at Drayton Junior has largely remained very stable. Your and their commitment to continually improving the school and reinforcing its place in the local community is tangible. So much so that, when the school's swimming pool was in a state of disrepair, the whole community mobilised and raised the tens of thousands of pounds needed to repair it. The local community, including other schools, now benefits from the reopening of the pool.

The school is a vibrant, inviting place, where staff feel valued and pupils thrive. The walls are adorned with beautiful artwork and an abundance of photographs of pupils taking part in a wide variety of activities. Pupils love coming to their 'fantastic, exciting' school. The school's 'CARE' ethos is embodied by everyone. Pupils support each other, enjoy the additional responsibilities they have as school councillors or playground buddies and say that the school is a 'kind place to be'. The central 'save the walrus' display in the reception area is testament to the school's commitment to 'caring', be it for the environment or for each other, as is evident in the 'recipe for being a good friend' display. 'Honesty, respect, listening, sharing and

laughter' are what pupils identified as being of great importance to them. During lessons and at play and lunchtimes, these qualities were much in evidence.

Parents and carers overwhelmingly support the school and your leadership. They say that their children are happy, well cared for and enjoy coming to school. Parents particularly value the good communication between home and school in the 'wonderful newsletters'. You have done much to improve links with the local infant school so that pupils get the best start they can at Drayton Junior. Parents appreciate this too. As one parent stated, 'The support from the school is amazing.'

At your previous inspection, leaders were asked to improve the quality of teaching and learning and to consolidate improvements in pupils' progress. Both of these areas have continued to improve, particularly since your arrival at the school. You have addressed inconsistency in teaching and raised teachers' expectations. The support that you and your senior leaders have put in place to improve teachers' and teaching assistants' practice is well documented and evident in the classrooms.

Teachers consistently adhere to the recently introduced 'cooperative learning strategy'. Pupils animatedly talked with each other about their work as either 'secretaries' or 'directors' and discussed in groups or pairs what they were learning. It is clear that this is having a considerable impact on pupils' reading and writing. As a result, pupils currently at the school make good progress in these subjects. Progress in mathematics, however, is slower in some classes, as you and your leaders are aware. Despite this, pupils are now well used to sharing their work with others, learning from their peers and exploring how they can improve it. It is evident that this firm foundation is already beginning to bear fruit in some classes in mathematics, where pupils readily challenge themselves and their classmates in problem-solving activities.

You and your team work very effectively together. Senior leaders continue to grow into their roles and the high expectations you have of them. Many staff I spoke with were effusive in their praise of your leadership and the difference you have made to the school. One said, 'It is like a different school since Mr Oldham arrived. I have learned so much and love coming to work.' Senior leaders are adept at using assessment information, analysing it carefully to highlight key priorities. You carry out regular assessments of pupils' progress, ensuring that any pupils who are at risk of falling behind are quickly identified and supported. Pupils who have special educational needs and/or disabilities make good progress like their classmates because the support they are given by staff is timely, appropriate and regularly checked for impact.

You have reviewed and changed curriculum planning and provision. As a result, they are real strengths of the school. Subject leaders regularly lead staff meetings to ensure that all staff have good subject knowledge, for example in history, geography, art and science. Very effective music and physical education teaching is provided by specialist teachers. Pupils said they enjoy the opportunities they get to take part in after-school clubs like drawing, dance and chess. They also really look forward to the many outdoor experiences and trips that the school provides. Pupils

spoke about their experience with 'SkillForce' as part of the Junior Prince's Award and how they can gain a passport for the children's university. Others said they are really looking forward to going to the outdoor activity centre at Whitlingham, while others talked about the fascinating experience they had talking to an archaeologist at the Castle Museum.

Safeguarding is effective.

Keeping children safe permeates all that the school does. Leaders and governors take their safeguarding role very seriously. They regularly evaluate the effectiveness of their safeguarding and child-protection procedures, highlighting any concerns that arise. For example, the external fencing to the school's exterior was renewed following a rigorous risk assessment.

You and your staff know your responsibilities well. You are tenacious in following up any concerns you have, liaising effectively with the police and social services when necessary. As a result, pupils and families receive good support from both the school and external agencies.

Pupils said they feel safe and know who to go to if they have a concern and how to keep themselves safe when using the computer or mobile phones. They know that bullying is 'when a person keeps on picking on you' and that it rarely occurs at Drayton Junior. Pupils told me that they know that they are 'responsible for their own actions, good or bad' and that behaviour in school is good.

Inspection findings

- In carrying out the inspection, I focused on a number of lines of enquiry. The first of these involved reviewing how well pupils are progressing in reading. This is because, although pupils attained well in 2016/17, they made less progress than they did in writing and mathematics. The proportion of pupils who achieved the higher standard, including disadvantaged pupils, was below the national average.
- For some time, the feeder infant school's key stage 1 results have been extremely high. For example, 48% of pupils entering your school who are now in Year 6 achieved the higher standard in reading, writing and mathematics at the end of Year 2. Sustaining progress and achievement with these high starting points has been a real challenge for you and your staff. Pupils joining you in Year 3 are now coming into the school with results which reflect a standard that is more in line with the national average.
- You and your leadership team were disappointed that the 2016/17 Year 6 results did not better reflect the progress that the most able pupils had made since key stage 1 and throughout each year group since then. However, several pupils were close to attaining the higher standard and made good progress.
- The proportion of current pupils across the school, including those who are disadvantaged, who are achieving age-related expectations in reading is consistently high. There is a steady increase in the proportion of pupils who are

on track to achieve the higher standard in reading in all year groups. What is more, pupils are increasingly using their reading skills to produce very engaging writing. For example, one pupil's work began, 'The screen flickered, and then again, and started flashing strange colours!'

- Pupils emphatically told me that they love reading. When asked why they enjoyed reading, comments were many and included 'It makes you forget everything around you', 'It sucks you in and makes you feel like the main character' and 'It is relaxing and gets you inspired.'
- The second line of enquiry involved reviewing the progress pupils make in mathematics. This is because the proportion of pupils who achieved the higher standard was below the national average, largely due to the high prior attainment of girls at key stage 1. You and your team also highlighted in your self-evaluation and school improvement plan that the progress of some pupils is slower in mathematics than in reading and writing.
- On closer scrutiny, it became clear that a number of pupils who exceeded expectations in key stage 1 did not make the progress expected of them in Year 6 in 2016/17. However, again, a number of pupils were very close to achieving the higher standard and made good progress.
- Regardless of this, the mathematics leader's action plan and your school development plan clearly recognise that mathematics needs further attention. However, actions taken since September 2017 are already having an impact on pupils' learning in some year groups, particularly in Years 4 and 5. As a result, the progress of these pupils is much more in line with what they are expected to achieve by the end of key stage 2. What is more, there is little difference between boys and girls, and disadvantaged pupils in Year 5 are achieving in line with their classmates.
- Work in pupils' books shows that they produce a lot of work, with many pupils starting their third workbook since September. However, much of that work is number-related and does little to develop pupils' reasoning, mastery and problem-solving skills. In some classes, these skills are developing well. I observed lessons where pupils were challenged to think hard about what they were learning and to apply what they already know to 'real-life' situations. Along with your mathematics leader, I also saw some examples of mathematics being used in subjects like science and geography. However, this good practice is not yet consistent between classes or year groups.
- Pupils like mathematics. They readily set about the tasks they are given, mostly with enthusiasm. However, there are not many opportunities for pupils to discuss what they are finding out. Where teachers organise time for pupils to talk about their learning, they challenge each other and like to make their learning competitive. However, too many pupils I spoke with say that, while they value the time they get to practise their basic skills, mathematics is too easy for them. Several pupils said, 'It would be good for us to be challenged more.'
- You are putting in place strategies to address this criticism. Pupils are offered a variety of 'levels' of work, with some accepting the 'hot chilli challenge' or selecting an option. In some of classes, teachers regularly check that pupils are

selecting work that is not too easy for them. However, this is not yet routine and some pupils, particularly the most able, are not achieving as well as they could.

- The third line of enquiry related to how well teachers and leaders are held to account for the progress of pupils in the school. This is because too few disadvantaged pupils make as much progress as they might, despite the additional funding that the school receives.
- Governors are astute at checking the school's work. They meet regularly with you and with other senior leaders to see how well pupils are progressing and what issues are arising as a result of your analysis. They receive detailed reports about the support that disadvantaged pupils receive, broken down into the specific amount of funding and intervention that is set aside for each pupil. They acknowledge in the school development plan, that some disadvantaged pupils, especially those who are most-able, are not making as much academic progress as they might. Funding is being used to support this aspect. However, leaders recognise that, in their social, emotional and mental health, some pupils have made considerable progress.
- Governors challenge leaders about the impact of actions in the improvement plans. Scrutiny of minutes of governors' meetings shows that governors do not shy away from asking probing questions. Governors are appreciative of the detailed information that you give them. They also employ the services of an external consultant to validate the school's work and to support them in rigorously undertaking your performance management review.

Next steps for the school

Leaders and those responsible for governance should ensure that:

- the proportion of pupils who attain the higher standard in mathematics increases to be more in line with the national average
- the progress of pupils across the school, including those who are disadvantaged, is accelerated so that they achieve as well as they can in mathematics
- teachers keep a closer eye on the choices pupils make when they select the level of work they do in mathematics lessons.

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

Yours sincerely

Ruth Brock
Her Majesty's Inspector

Information about the inspection

During the inspection, I spoke with you, your deputy headteacher, leaders of assessment and mathematics and the chair and vice-chair of governors. I also had a telephone conversation with a representative from the local authority. You, or your deputy headteacher, and I observed learning in eight lessons across all year groups. During that time, I spoke with pupils about their learning and looked at the work in their English and mathematics books. Together with your leaders of assessment and mathematics, I looked at pupils' work in their mathematics and topic books. I met with a group of 10 pupils formally to talk with them about their school experience. I also took into consideration any written communication from parents and the views of 69 parents who responded to Parent View, Ofsted's online questionnaire. I viewed a range of school documentation, including information related to safeguarding, attendance, pupils' progress and the curriculum, school development plans and the school's self-evaluation.