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12 March 2018

Miss Carla Stedman
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Dear Miss Stedman

Short inspection of The Bawburgh School

Following my visit to the school on 27 February 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 April 2014.

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.**

On taking up your post as headteacher in January 2017, you took stock of what was working well and what needed development. Since then you have rightly taken a considered approach to bringing about the improvements you judged to be necessary. You have established a strong senior leadership team and together you have successfully increased the pace of school improvement.

The effect of your work is evident in the continued improvement in pupils' attainment and achievement in the early years and key stage 1. For example, children have a positive start to their education in the well-organised and welcoming Reception class. The proportion of children achieving a good level of development increased in 2017 and was considerably above the national average. Pupils continue to successfully build on this strong start in key stage 1. In 2017, all pupils in Year 1 achieved the expected standard in the phonics screening check. The proportions of pupils working at the expected and higher standards by the end of key stage 1 in reading, writing and mathematics were above the national averages in 2017. However, there is more to be done to ensure that the changes you are making enable pupils to consistently make the progress of which they are capable by the end of key stage 2.

During this period of change, you have maintained the family feel and community spirit of the school noted at the time of the previous inspection. Parents and carers I spoke with on the day of inspection told me how happy and well cared for their children were at school. Despite this, a small number of parents who responded to Parent View and made comments on the free-text service expressed frustration at how the school communicates with them and responds to concerns they have. You acknowledge that, at a time when you have made many changes, you need to reflect on how you communicate with and respond to parents.

The previous report also commented positively about the work of the governing body. Governors remain reflective and committed to the development and well-being of staff and pupils. Governors willingly dedicate time to their role. However, governors, as part of their own self-evaluation, recognise they need to be as challenging as they are supportive of you and your senior team. As a consequence, governors have commissioned an external review of their work, which will take place in March 2018.

Pupils typically behave well. They understand the school values. For example, they explained how resilience means 'I keep working in maths until I get it', and how cooperation means 'working together nicely'. Relationships are harmonious and built upon respect. This helps pupils develop confidence in their learning and they understand how 'making mistakes are an important part of the process of learning'. The confidence with which pupils go about their work and play is evident in the sense of security and well-being they display when at school.

Staff told me how much they value your clarity, organisation and commitment to their professional development. You support and challenge staff to achieve their best. For example, as part of your strategy to improve the quality of teaching, learning and assessment, you have established productive relationships with local schools. Teachers and leaders explained how visits to these schools and the work of external consultants have helped them to develop their skills and knowledge. The impact of this work is seen in the improving quality of teaching, learning and assessment. You are also correctly holding teachers and leaders clearly to account for the quality of their work through your regular pupil progress meetings.

Safeguarding is effective.

Leaders, including the governing body, have ensured that pupils' well-being is given the highest priority. Pupils who spoke with me explained that they feel safe because 'we know teachers are looking after us'. Pupils also confidently outlined the strategies they would use to stay safe online. The overwhelming majority of parents agree that pupils are safe at school.

Pupils understand the difference between bullying and the occasional falling out that can occur between friends. They told me that bullying is not a common occurrence at their school and that adults would deal with any incidents well. School records confirm this to be the case.

You make sure staff receive appropriate safeguarding training, often provided by external experts. Teachers and support staff know their pupils well and also know how to recognise the signs that indicate a pupil may be vulnerable or in need of help. Staff are also very familiar with the procedures they need to follow to report any concerns and are confident that leaders will act on these concerns swiftly and effectively. Leaders' well-kept records demonstrate that when a pupil is in need of additional support, they receive it in a timely and proportionate way.

Governors are diligent in ensuring that the school's record of checks carried out on staff is securely and accurately maintained. The governing body has also supported you as you have rightly made improvements to the security of the school site.

Inspection findings

- We agreed my first key line of enquiry was to establish the progress pupils make in mathematics by the end of key stage 2. This is because in the previous inspection report leaders were asked to improve pupils' achievement in mathematics. However, since the previous inspection, pupils' achievement in mathematics by the end of key stage 2 has remained lower than it should have been.
- You and your leaders have reviewed the causes of pupils' underachievement in mathematics. You also commissioned an external review to validate your understanding of what needed to improve. Making good use of this information, you are successfully bringing about much needed improvements in the teaching of mathematics.
- You have provided teachers with appropriate training and new schemes of work to ensure that pupils have access to a well-delivered and logical sequence of learning. Teachers explained to me how much more confident they are when teaching mathematics. Pupils also explained how much they enjoy their lessons and are more challenged in their work. One pupil told me how the school's stretch tasks 'help me learn more and challenge myself to do even better'. His classmates agreed.
- Evidence in pupils' books demonstrates that pupils in key stage 2 are starting to make more rapid progress and are rising to the challenges of increasingly difficult and complex mathematical problems. However, this aspect of your work is relatively new and we agreed it needs longer to have a full impact on pupils' achievement. For example, there remains some unevenness in the effectiveness with which teachers in key stage 2 apply your chosen approach to teaching mathematics.
- In 2016 and 2017, by the end of key stage 2, pupils' progress in reading and writing was in line with other pupils nationally. We agreed that my second line of enquiry was to establish how successfully leaders have helped pupils make even better progress in reading and writing.
- As part of your carefully considered school improvement strategy, you have also reviewed the school's approach to teaching reading and writing. Building upon foundations already in place, you have amended how reading and writing are

taught. Pupils told me how their teachers explain things more carefully and clearly than was previously the case. Teachers again agree that they are more confident in what they are teaching. This is leading to improved pupil achievement across key stage 2.

- In reading, pupils are making good or improving progress. Teachers choose texts that interest pupils. As a consequence, pupils enjoy reading and are confident in making inferences about what they have read. In writing, pupils are already putting to good use the skills they have developed in their recently introduced spelling and grammar lessons. Pupils are more accurate in their spelling and are making more ambitious choices of language in their writing. In key stage 2 pupils' writing books, we saw examples of increasingly sophisticated and imaginative writing which indicate that pupils are typically making good progress.
- To establish if the school continues to provide a good quality of education, I wanted to see how well pupils performed in subjects other than English and mathematics across the curriculum. Pupils told me they enjoy learning in a range of subjects. They explained how much the topics they study in art, geography and history interest them. Displays of current pupils' work provide evidence of how accomplished and creative they can be in their work.
- However, teachers' high expectations apparent in English and mathematics are not consistently evident across the other subjects. Teachers do not consistently plan and implement sequences of learning that enable pupils to develop their skills and abilities in subjects such as history, geography and science. Pupils' presentation of their work in their books across the wider curriculum varies as teachers do not insist on the same high standards of presentation as they usually do in English and mathematics.
- Middle leaders do not track the progress pupils make across the wider curriculum with the same precision as they do in English and mathematics. As a result of this uneven approach to the planning, teaching and leading of the wider curriculum, the progress pupils make in subjects other than English and mathematics is slower than it should be.

Next steps for the school

Leaders and those responsible for governance should ensure that:

- teachers in key stage 2 further develop their skills and knowledge so they are more adept in the teaching of mathematics and so enable pupils to make good or better progress
- there is a more consistent approach to the leadership, planning and implementation of learning activities in subjects other than English and mathematics
- they review and make appropriate amendments to the way they communicate with parents about the good work taking place in school
- governors provide greater challenge to leaders to make sure that they continue to raise standards for pupils.

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

Yours sincerely

John Lucas
Her Majesty's Inspector

Information about the inspection

I held discussions with you about the key lines of enquiry for this inspection, leaders' evaluation of the quality of education, plans for future improvement and information about current pupils' learning.

I met with other leaders, and all teachers who were in school on the day of the inspection. I also spoke with members of the support staff. I met with the chair of the governing body, along with four other governors. I held a telephone conversation with a representative of the local authority and met with the headteacher of a local school who is acting as your mentor.

I examined several documents, including: the school's improvement plan; leaders' monitoring and analysis of pupils' progress; records of pupils' attendance; pupil premium reports; and the school's safeguarding arrangements, records, files and documentation.

You and I observed pupils learning in Reception and each of the key stage 2 classes. We also looked at examples of key stage 1 and key stage 2 pupils' work to explore the progress they are making over time. I spoke with a group of 10 pupils and also with others informally during lessons and at breaktime regarding their learning. There were no responses to the pupils' online survey.

I considered the views of parents I spoke with at the start and end of the school day. I also took into account the views of 44 parents who responded to Ofsted's online survey, Parent View, along with the 33 free-text comments. There were no responses to Ofsted's staff questionnaire.