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Mr Tom Rees
Executive Headteacher
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Dear Mr Rees

Short inspection of Simon de Senlis Primary 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 July 2014.

This school continues to be good.

The leadership team has maintained the good quality of education in the school since the last inspection. Since then, the school has converted to an academy and joined a growing local trust. With the governors, you have taken executive responsibility for overseeing the standards and effectiveness of education in the school. You also have oversight of the quality of education across all schools in the trust. The school population has remained stable and the school continues to host a 12-place special educational needs unit. The school has developed a strong and effective leadership team with clearly articulated roles and responsibilities. Parents and carers report high levels of satisfaction with the school, expressing their appreciation of its highly inclusive and welcoming ethos. It is clear that strong and effective working relationships permeate the school community at all levels.

Leaders accurately evaluate the strengths and areas for development for the school and have developed appropriate plans to help move the school forward. At all levels, there are high expectations of staff to contribute to the school as research-engaged professionals. In recent years, where some of the outcomes for pupils have been slightly lower than the national average, leaders have identified initiatives with proven impact and sought to embed them across the school. Governors demonstrate a clear analytical grasp of the current position of the school and have sought additional challenge and support from a national leader of education. There is confidence both in their use of performance information and in the deployment of resources to ensure the success of new initiatives.

Leaders have responded to the areas for improvement identified in the previous inspection report by systematically reforming the teaching of mathematics. Subject leaders for mathematics have correctly identified fluency and reasoning as areas of focus for the school. They have developed a series of actions which are starting to make a significant impact on the progress of pupils. New teaching techniques have been introduced through whole-staff training and development. The grouping of pupils is also managed flexibly in response to daily evidence of pupils' grasp of key concepts and ideas. Pupils respond well to the opportunities generated by new curriculum programmes and demonstrate a good understanding of the importance of showing their reasoning. Subject leadership across the trust has enabled the school to participate in moderation of standards and to question the analysis of test papers.

In early years, leaders have also responded to concerns regarding the pace of progress of Reception children and have invested significantly in the quality of the environment. The impact of rigorous teaching of kinetic letters and synthetic phonics is evident in improved outcomes in this area. The introduction of new writing opportunities at the beginning of every month enables children to enjoy and achieve. Close monitoring of the quality of teaching and learning by leaders suggests that staff have a good degree of knowledge of all areas of the early years curriculum. Leaders have made targeted investment in the quality of the outdoor environment and the ethos of continuous provision. Child-centred learning is helping to raise confidence and develop independent learning skills.

Safeguarding is effective.

Leaders have developed an effective safeguarding culture, including well-designed policies and procedures. Implementation of an effective digital record-keeping system has enabled the school to record concerns and maintain a close eye on the progress of actions. Where pupils require extended levels of support from external agencies, leaders are diligent in their communications. The single central record is comprehensive and there is robust evidence that safer recruitment procedures are in place.

Expectations for positive learning behaviours are clearly defined in the school's values, which are well understood by pupils. Behaviour and conduct are strong around the school and it is clear that staff provide a safe and welcoming environment. Anti-bullying messages are clearly communicated through the personal, health and social education programme, which includes dedicated themed weeks. The importance of e-safety is communicated to parents through well-attended training events. Both parents and pupils consider that the school provides a safe and caring environment and speak highly of their fully inclusive community. Levels of attendance of pupils at the school are in line with the national average, although vulnerable pupils are more likely to be persistently absent. The school has implemented a robust attendance monitoring system and works closely with the local authority to manage absences.

Staff receive appropriate training and regular updates, which include the threat of radicalisation and the importance of swiftly identifying children missing in education. A new digital record-keeping system has been well chosen and carefully implemented, enabling staff to closely monitor the behaviour and safety of pupils. The dedicated safeguarding governor conducts regular monitoring visits.

Inspection findings

- Pupils benefit from a vibrant and creative curriculum which is planned collaboratively and with careful consideration of the demands of national curriculum programmes of study. Topic-based work includes a range of cross-curricular learning opportunities and writing portfolios contain extensive evidence of the impact of engaging activities on the development of sustained writing.
- The school has developed a wide range of appropriate initiatives designed to improve pupils' reading. These include a newly developed library which contains sets of the '100 books for everyone' and a weekly book club which disadvantaged pupils, in particular, are encouraged to attend. Strategic investment in a critical reading programme alongside discrete grammar lessons is enabling teachers to improve comprehension and develop pupils' vocabulary.
- Well-designed working walls have been developed in every classroom including spelling, punctuation and grammar tips. Pupils are also encouraged to draft and edit their work and the school marking and feedback policy plays a key role in the school's commitment to 'responsive teaching'.
- Teachers in key stage 1 have developed particular skill in the teaching of phonics and early writing. It is clear that there is potential for best practice in this area to be further shared across the staff team. Improving the progress of the most vulnerable and lower prior attaining pupils in reading and writing in both key stages continues to be a priority for the school.
- The school is rightly proud of the success of its special unit for pupils who have special educational needs. Targeted funding is well deployed by leaders, who are robustly held to account for the outcomes of this group of pupils by a dedicated governor who is also a qualified leader of special needs education. A well-developed inclusion policy includes significant consideration of the role of parents in maintaining the momentum of the learning experience. Additional adults are highly skilled and closely engaged with teachers in planning quality learning experiences. It is clear that improving the progress of these pupils continues to be a priority for the school.
- Leaders have invested significant resource in developing the artistic dimension of the school environment. A number of creatively designed displays provide inspiration and imaginative opportunities to engage with learning. Pupils speak with pride about the commitment of school staff to the performing arts. Participation of pupils in clubs and trips is particularly strong. The school has been rightly recognised for its efforts with the award of the Artsmark gold award.
- The school has developed an effective curriculum for personal, social and emotional education. Introduction of the 'jigsaw' model has enabled leaders to

focus on the development of positive attitudes to learning. Pupils express a clear understanding of the principles of equality and diversity and appreciate the range of anti-bullying initiatives promoted by staff. The school's STOP approach to bullying is well understood.

- The opportunity to become a 'star of the week' is also highly valued and evidence of a culture of reward and celebration of achievement is all-pervasive.
- The school has developed particular expertise in the use of digital technologies to enhance teaching and learning. Leaders have also taken a national platform in sharing best practice in technology-informed teaching at conferences.

Next steps for the school

Leaders and those responsible for governance should ensure that:

- the progress and attainment of disadvantaged pupils and those who have low prior attainment improves rapidly in both key stages
- the impact of strategies designed to improve outcomes for pupils in mathematics are closely evaluated so that barriers to progress are swiftly removed.

I am copying this letter to the chair of the governing body, and the chief executive officer of the multi-academy trust, the regional schools commissioner and the director of children's services for Northamptonshire. This letter will be published on the Ofsted website.

Yours sincerely

Emma Hollis-Brown
Ofsted Inspector

Information about the inspection

During the inspection, I met with you and shared my lines of enquiry. I also met with the subject leaders for mathematics and English, representatives of the governing body, and the chief executive officer of the trust. I considered the 110 responses of parents from Ofsted's online survey, Parent View, along with some free-text comments, and met with parents at the start of the school day. We visited classes in key stage 1 and key stage 2 together and considered pupils' work in books. I observed pupils' behaviour and met with a group of them to discuss their experiences of the school. I viewed a range of documents, including leaders' evaluation of the school's current performance, its plans for further improvement and information on pupils' current progress. I considered a number of policy documents, including those related to safeguarding. I also considered recruitment checks in order to confirm the robustness of practice.