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18 April 2018

Mr Nicholas King
Headteacher
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Dear Mr King

Short inspection of Scarning Voluntary Controlled Primary School

Following my visit to the school on 27 March 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 June 2014.

This school continues to be good.

The leadership team has maintained the good quality of education in the school since the last inspection.

Attainment in reading, writing and mathematics at the end of key stage 2 has been consistently at or above the national average for the past three years. Your leadership has enabled the school to meet successfully the challenges of the major changes there have been to primary education since 2014. The leaders of English and mathematics have implemented the new national curriculum effectively so that outcomes for your pupils have continued to improve in line with the rise in national standards. You have achieved this by developing an effective team of senior leaders who have the full support of teaching and support staff. Staff feel valued and morale is high. This means that all members of staff are motivated to do their very best for the pupils.

Scarning Primary is a popular school and numbers have increased since the previous inspection. You and the governing body are determined to maintain the friendly and calm atmosphere in school as numbers continue to rise and you prepare to move the early years provision into a new building next year. Pupils told me that they enjoy coming to school and their good attendance and behaviour support this. In class, pupils want to do well and show lots of enthusiasm for learning. They work productively together, embrace the challenging activities their teachers plan for them and take pride in presenting their work well. The school environment is orderly and vibrant and celebrates pupils' work and achievements in colourful

displays.

The Reception classroom is well organised and provides stimulating activities that enable children to form good relationships quickly, learn to listen and acquire the skills that will help them to make rapid strides towards reaching the good level of development expected for their age. Knowledgeable staff tailor learning to the interests of the children.

Since the previous inspection, you have revised the way that mathematics is taught. In 2017, attainment in mathematics at the end of key stage 2 placed the school in the top 10% of schools nationally. The progress that pupils made from key stage 1 was well above average. Teachers plan tasks for pupils that develop their reasoning and problem-solving skills. Work in pupils' books clearly demonstrates the rapid progress that pupils make over time. In a Year 3 mathematics lesson, pupils embraced the challenge of 'grapple time', where they are presented with a series of mathematical problems to reason out with their learning partner.

Safeguarding is effective.

As safeguarding lead, you ensure that staff are well informed about new safeguarding guidance through regular training and updates. You work closely with families to ensure that your most vulnerable pupils are in school and able to learn. When necessary, you seek the help of outside agencies to support them further. Pupils who spoke to me during the inspection all said that they felt safe in school and that there was at least one adult they would be comfortable talking to if they were worried about anything. Parents and carers who responded to Ofsted's online questionnaire, Parent View, overwhelmingly agree that their children are well looked after and have no concerns about their safety at school. The curriculum helps to raise awareness in children of how to keep themselves safe in different circumstances. Pupils talked to me about how to keep safe online and how to keep themselves healthy.

Your governors actively fulfil their statutory duties to ensure that pupils are safe in school. The school's safeguarding policies and procedures meet current requirements. Recording systems are fully in place for the recruitment of staff and you and your governing body have ensured that all necessary checks are carried out on new staff.

Inspection findings

- To determine whether the school remained good, I wanted to explore how the school is accelerating the progress of all pupils, but especially boys, in reading and writing. In 2017, the progress that pupils made in reading and writing by the end of key stage 2, although in line with other schools, was not as strong as the progress they made in mathematics. You have already taken action to address this. For example, Year 6 pupils told me how much they enjoy their 'big reads' when they spend extended periods reading high-quality texts in order to build their stamina. You are now extending this to Year 5 pupils.

- The early years leader has identified that more boys start Reception with underdeveloped fine-motor skills and this is slowing their progress from mark making to writing. More activities such as 'fiddly fingers' and 'dough gym' are helping boys to develop these skills more quickly. A variety of opportunities for children to practise their writing have been introduced, both inside and outside. For example, recent exploration of superheroes provided unusual opportunities for children to write using invisible ink and torches. You have also ensured that older pupils get the chance to write in a range of styles across subjects. Pupils are increasingly confident at editing their own work. A focus on improving handwriting has had a significant impact on the quality and length of written work across year groups.
- I also looked carefully at the quality of support you provide to pupils who have special educational needs (SEN) and/or disabilities, as well as other vulnerable groups such as disadvantaged pupils. Improving the effectiveness of teaching assistants was an area identified for improvement in the previous inspection. In every classroom I visited during my visit, teaching assistants were fully involved in supporting the learning of pupils. Your SEN coordinator has a robust system for tracking the progress of pupils and evaluating the impact of the support carried out by teaching assistants. Teaching assistants have the same opportunities for training as teachers and many of them have developed a specialism which they share with colleagues. Teachers take responsibility for adapting learning to meet the needs of all pupils and so pupils who have SEN and/or disabilities are very well supported and make good progress from their varied starting points.
- The proportion of disadvantaged pupils varies widely across year groups. However, for each child the barriers to learning are clearly identified and support provided to ensure that they have the best chance to do as well as other pupils. You promptly identified that disadvantaged pupils made less progress in mathematics than in reading and writing by the end of key stage 2 in 2017. Actions are in place to address this and current information shows that across the school disadvantaged pupils are now making the same progress as other pupils in mathematics. You have also had success with pupils who arrive at Scarning during the year having struggled at other schools. These pupils settle quickly and their progress accelerates because of the way staff manage their behaviour and interest them in learning.
- Another area I investigated was the breadth of the curriculum available to your pupils. The rich and varied diet of topics, enrichment activities and extra-curricular opportunities captures the interest of your pupils very well. Since your arrival at the school, you have introduced 'The Scarning Windmill Curriculum'. This ensures that learning goes beyond reading, writing and mathematics. This curriculum develops, for example, pupils' understanding of citizenship and their local community. Pupils also get the opportunity to become graduates of 'The Children's University'. This encourages them to get involved in a wide range of extra-curricular activities, exposing them to new experiences and broadening their understanding of the world.
- In the classroom, pupils study many interesting topics across a range of subjects. The art curriculum has recently been revised and ensures that pupils develop as

artists as they move through the school. This has given non-specialist teachers the confidence to explore artists such as Georgia O’Keeffe and Lowry with their classes. Pupils enjoy learning about art and their resulting work is impressive. However, at present this focus on developing skills in specific subjects is not secure in all areas of the curriculum. History topics, for example, are often used to extend pupils’ writing, rather than developing the skills they will need to become good historians.

Next steps for the school

Leaders and those responsible for governance should ensure that:

- progress in reading and writing is as strong as it is in mathematics
- teachers plan lessons in subjects such as history and geography that develop specific skills and key knowledge.

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

Lesley Daniel
Ofsted Inspector

Information about the inspection

During the inspection, I met with you, your deputy headteacher and other senior leaders, the chair of the governing body as well as two other governors and a representative from the local authority. I visited classes with you where I observed pupils learning and talked to them about their work and their school. In lessons, we looked at pupils’ work in books to determine the quality of learning over time and the quality of learning across the curriculum.

I spent time speaking informally with pupils in class and met with members of the school council. I considered the 66 responses to Parent View, which included free-text comments, and the views of parents who contacted me directly during the inspection. I also took into account the 31 completed staff questionnaires. I scrutinised the school’s documents about safeguarding, including the record of checks on the suitability of each member of staff to work with children and young people, the school’s own evaluation of its performance and your plans for its improvement.