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Mr Mike Hooper
Acting Headteacher
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Dear Mr Hooper

Short inspection of Avenue Junior School

Following my visit to the school on 20 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 October 2013.

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.**

Since the previous inspection, there have been changes to leadership at Avenue Junior School. Two assistant headteachers joined the leadership team and you took up your post as acting headteacher in September 2017. During this time, leaders have maintained the friendly, positive learning atmosphere noted in the previous section 5 inspection report. Avenue Junior School remains a happy, inclusive place in which to learn. The overwhelming majority of staff are proud to work at the school.

Leaders have ensured that pupils typically achieve well in reading and writing. Where your precise monitoring indicates that standards slip in these subjects, leaders draw up well-thought-out plans to put things right. After the previous inspection, leaders introduced the school's 'presentation promise' to ensure that the care with which pupils present their work in their books improved. Evidence seen on this inspection demonstrates that pupils typically present their work carefully and well. However, you know that strategies to accelerate pupils' progress in mathematics over the same period of time have not been as successful as they should have been.

Leaders have gone to great lengths to ensure that pupils' well-being is comprehensively provided for, including those most in need of support. Parents and

carers are overwhelmingly positive about the level of care the school affords to their children. Comments such as, 'Avenues is an extremely nurturing and caring school' and, 'It's a great community for my child to belong to and learn within' are representative of many of the views expressed. Pupils are similarly appreciative of the support they receive from adults, including the pastoral worker and year-team leaders.

You are successfully developing pupils' spiritual, moral, cultural and social awareness. Pupils and parents told me how much they value the rich, varied curriculum that leaders have designed. The many bright displays capture the breadth of opportunities pupils have to take part in music, drama, visual arts, sporting and community-based activities. Pupils I spoke with demonstrated a mature understanding of the importance of the arts, respect, tolerance and understanding. You are rightly proud that the quality of the school's provision has been acknowledged through the recent equalities award, Artsmark gold award and its recognition as a 'school of sanctuary' for refugees.

Leaders' work is also reflected in the thoughtful and considerate behaviour of very many pupils. Pupils' behaviour more often than not reflects your school's values of respect, resilience and aspiration. They told me that these values 'remind us to be respectful; they are not just words on a wall'. Pupils also explained that resilience means, 'When you are on the brink of giving up, you give it one more shot.' The overwhelming majority of parents who responded to Parent View, Ofsted's online questionnaire, agreed that the school makes sure pupils behave well.

Governors share leaders' wholehearted commitment to providing a rich and varied education for pupils. Governors are reflective and provide you with an appropriate balance of support and challenge. They have a detailed knowledge of the school and are taking action to make sure improvements are brought about. However, governors recognise that the pace of improvement in mathematics has not been rapid enough. They told me they were disappointed that the 2017 outcomes were not in line with leaders' expectations. Governors have taken steps to challenge leaders about the accuracy of teachers' assessments in mathematics and are rightly seeking further validation of the information they are given.

Safeguarding is effective.

Leaders, including governors, consider pupils' safety to be of the highest priority and have successfully ensured that Avenue Junior School is one in which pupils are safe and very well cared for. Pupils' sense of security is clearly evident in the confident, cheerful way they conduct themselves throughout the day.

Staff make a significant contribution to the strong safeguarding culture that exists. They are appropriately trained and frequently updated on safeguarding matters. As a result, staff are well equipped to recognise changes in behaviour, appearance and attitude that indicate a child may be at risk. Adults know what to do if they have concerns and have faith that safeguarding leaders will deal with referrals well. Leaders' well-kept records indicate that they take timely action when a pupil is in

need of additional support.

Staff explained that they are encouraged to follow up on the progress of any issue they refer. Inspection evidence demonstrates that, where appropriate, they do so, and this adds to the rigour of the school's safeguarding procedures.

Pupils told me they feel very safe at school. One pupil, when asked if Avenue Junior School was one in which they felt happy and safe, replied, 'Definitely.' Her friends agreed. Pupils explained that staff care for them well and act swiftly to help out if a pupil is anxious or has concerns. Almost all parents who replied to Parent View agreed their children are safe, happy and well cared for.

Pupils have a clear understanding about the difference between bullying and falling out. Pupils struggled to recall any incidents of bullying and demonstrated great maturity in explaining that when fall-outs between friends occur, 'We make the effort to make friends again.'

Governors ensure that records of checks carried out on staff working in the school are accurately maintained. Leaders also seek external validation of the effectiveness of their safeguarding systems.

Inspection findings

- Pupils' progress in mathematics has been significantly lower than that of other pupils nationally for the previous three years. Bringing about improvements in pupils' achievement in mathematics was identified as an area for improvement at the time of the previous inspection. This is why my first line of enquiry was to establish how well pupils currently on roll are achieving and making better progress than in the past.
- You are highly reflective and have altered strategies that had not previously been successful in mathematics. While this process began last year, you are accelerating this work in the light of pupils' lower-than-expected achievement by the end of key stage 2 in 2017. We agreed that, while pupils are now making better progress, more time is needed for the full impact of this work to be seen on raising pupils' achievement.
- Mathematics leaders have taken additional steps to ensure that they have an accurate understanding of pupils' mathematical knowledge and skills when they join the school in Year 3. Using this information, and guided by the school's clear set of mathematical principles, subject leaders have provided teachers with appropriate training. This is bringing about improvements in the quality of teaching, learning and assessment.
- Teachers told me they are more confident in the teaching and assessment of mathematics. In line with your expectations they are planning logical sequences of learning, to enable pupils to consolidate their mathematical knowledge and understanding. However, teachers' skill in implementing and adapting learning activities in lessons remains less consistent than you want it to be.
- Teachers' effectiveness in enabling the most able pupils to achieve the standards

they should remain too uneven. Where practice is strongest, teachers' excellent subject knowledge, precise questioning and skill at judging when to move pupils on in their learning is helping pupils to make stronger progress. You recognise this practice is not sufficiently commonplace to ensure that pupils make consistently rapid progress.

- You are also taking steps to ensure that the accuracy of teachers' assessments of pupils' progress in mathematics improves. Leaders routinely check that teachers' assessments precisely reflect the quality of pupils' work. You are seeking further external validation of the accuracy of leaders and teachers' judgement about the progress pupils make.
- My second line of enquiry was to establish the effectiveness with which leaders are using additional government funding to support disadvantaged pupils. This was because, in 2017, disadvantaged pupils made less progress than other pupils nationally in reading, writing and mathematics.
- The leadership of provision for disadvantaged pupils is increasingly effective. Leaders, including governors, carefully reviewed the reasons for pupils' underachievement and have made appropriate changes to the provision for disadvantaged pupils.
- You have a precise understanding of the barriers to learning that the disadvantaged pupils currently in school face. Through effective pastoral support, pupils are being helped to develop their preparedness for, and confidence in, learning. Pupils are increasingly resilient in their learning.
- You ensure that teachers are well informed about the pupils they teach. Teachers confidently explained the strategies they use to help disadvantaged pupils in their learning. Inspection evidence, including the school's own assessment information, indicates disadvantaged pupils are making improved progress from their individual starting points.
- My final line of enquiry was to determine how successfully leaders are in making sure all groups of pupils attend well. Overall pupil attendance has been higher than the national averages since the previous inspection. However, this has not been the case for disadvantaged pupils or for pupils who have special educational needs (SEN) and/or disabilities.
- You are taking decisive action to ensure that where a pupil's attendance is a cause for concern, it improves. For example, pupils' punctuality has improved as a result of the introduction of your breakfast club. There have been some dramatic improvements in the attendance of individual pupils who are being supported by your pastoral worker. The proportion of pupils who have SEN and/or disabilities who are persistently absent has fallen sharply. However, the proportion of disadvantaged pupils who are persistently absent remains higher than it should be and continues to be a focus of your work.

Next steps for the school

Leaders and those responsible for governance should ensure that:

- teachers consistently and effectively apply strategies to accelerate pupils'

progress in mathematics, including for the most able, so higher proportions of pupils make at least good progress

- teachers' assessments of the progress pupils make in mathematics are accurate
- they accelerate their work to improve disadvantaged pupils' attendance so that it is at least in line with the national average for all 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, teachers, and members of support staff, and the chair of governors together with four other governors. I also met with a representative of the local authority.
- Documents such as: the school's improvement plan; leaders' monitoring and analysis of the progress pupils make; records of pupils' attendance; pupil premium reports; and the school's safeguarding arrangements, records, files and documentation were examined.
- You and I observed pupils learning in classes in each year group. We also looked at examples of pupils' work in mathematics to explore the progress they are making over time.
- I spoke with two groups of pupils and also with others informally during lessons and at breaktime regarding their learning. There were no responses to the pupil online survey.
- I considered the views of parents I spoke with at the start of the school day. I also took into account the views of 123 parents who responded on Parent View and the 67 parents who left comments on the Parent View free-text service.
- There were 27 responses to Ofsted's staff questionnaire.