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Mr Ben Tull
Headteacher
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Dear Mr Tull

Short inspection of Arbury Primary School

Following my visit to the school on 23 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 March 2014.

This school continues to be good.

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

Working alongside a strong and experienced team of leaders, you have created a very special ethos that is highly praised by staff, pupils and parents and carers. This is fully inclusive and makes clear that each individual is precious. Parents said that they and their children are treated with respect and that school staff do all they can to support them. Families very much embrace the values of the school and praised the way that any concerns are dealt with. One parent said, 'They put a lot of time into teaching the kids to respect difference and challenge stereotypes.' Another said, 'They don't talk about inclusion; they live inclusion.'

The school is a hive of activity, with interested, enthusiastic pupils and energetic staff. Pupils have very positive attitudes to learning. They enjoy finding out new things and work very well together. Teachers have high expectations of them. Pupils take a pride in their work and this is reflected in the neat presentation in their books and in their tidy handwriting.

You have worked effectively to maintain and build on the many strengths identified at your previous inspection and to tackle the areas for improvement. Writing, in particular, is much stronger. Pupils have many opportunities to write at length. They write in different subjects extensively, not just in English. The work in their topic books is of the same good quality as it is in their English books. For example, in

science, Year 6 pupils wrote knowledgeably about the life of Mary Anning, the fossil hunter. Rigorous monitoring by leaders ensures that teaching remains consistently good, with teachers in all classes expecting much of their pupils. Pupils are confident to use a range of sentence structures. In 2017, their English grammar, punctuation and spelling were in line with the national average in the national assessments at the end of Year 6.

The school not only ensures that pupils do well academically; it also offers a rich and vibrant curriculum that gives pupils memorable experiences and enables them to excel in music, drama, the arts and sport. During the inspection, pupils in Years 3 and 4 were rehearsing for their end-of-term production, 'Robin and the Sherwood hoodies', with great skill and verve, demonstrating that singing and acting are real strengths.

The school has established a well-deserved reputation for celebrating difference, and its excellence as a school where all pupils are respected and allowed to be themselves is something the school community values highly. For example, leaders have put together practical advice for schools with a child transitioning gender. They believe it is important that families and young people know that equality is a legal right. The school gives out a clear message to everyone that here is a safe space. As one parent put it, 'I admire all the work the school does to promote open-mindedness, tolerance and inquisitiveness in the children.'

Governors know the school well. They consider progress against the school's termly 'raising attainment plan' at each meeting, and minutes show that they ask probing questions. They have supported a restructure of the leadership team so that you have more time to work on future plans, freed from some of the routines that others could do. Governors recognise that more can be done to raise standards for the early years children and diminish differences between disadvantaged pupils and others.

Safeguarding is effective.

You have ensured that a culture of safeguarding permeates the work of the school. There is very strong pastoral support for pupils and their families. You have invested heavily in the expertise of an educational psychologist, a speech therapist and counselling and independent outreach services to enable the school to respond to needs promptly. Leaders keep very careful records of concerns and work closely with other agencies. They will challenge if they are not happy with any decisions that are made that affect their pupils.

The single central record of employment checks is complete and thorough, additionally listing the safeguarding training that all adults have received. Staff work hard to engage parents and have established positive relationships with families over time. They have built up a level of trust whereby sometimes families approach the school for support. Pupils said that they feel safe in school and bullying is not an issue. They said that they can approach staff with any concerns and are confident that they would be dealt with.

Inspection findings

- In order to make sure the school remains good, I identified a number of lines of enquiry that we agreed at our initial meeting. First, we considered how provision in the early years ensures that the proportion of children reaching a good level of development rises to at least the national average. This was because, in previous years, weaker standards in writing kept scores low.
- Children often join Reception with skills below what is typical for their age. The provision is strong. Children are happy and settled. They have plenty of opportunities to write, both with an adult and on their own. For example, children wrote sentences in response to finding in the woods a giant golden egg that had been lost. Children form their letters with confidence and begin to spell phonetically.
- You acknowledge that standards have been too low in the past, but a focus on improving writing this year means that more children are on track to reach a good level of development. Targets have been raised in response to the good progress that children have made.
- Next, we considered how well middle leaders use data to raise standards in their different subjects. This was an area to improve at the previous inspection. A new tracking system has been adopted since the previous inspection, and this is ensuring that middle leaders track pupils' attainment and progress effectively. They are using this information well to gain an overview of standards in their subjects. This more rigorous approach has contributed to the rise in standards in subjects other than English and mathematics.
- Finally, we considered what the school is doing to ensure that disadvantaged pupils attain as well as other pupils, especially in key stage 1. This was because differences were considerable between the attainment of disadvantaged pupils and that of others in the key stage 1 assessments in 2017.
- The school has appointed a 'virtual pupil premium teacher' to champion the progress of disadvantaged pupils. She helps pupils to overcome barriers to learning and to understand how to learn. Teachers work hard to raise the aspirations of all pupils, but particularly of the most vulnerable. This has had a positive impact for current Year 2 pupils, for whom differences from other pupils, particularly in writing and mathematics, are much smaller than last year.
- You recognise that there is still work to do to diminish these differences in some other year groups, including in the current Year 3. While disadvantaged pupils make good progress, in some cases they do not make enough accelerated progress to catch up with their classmates, who also achieve well.

Next steps for the school

Leaders and those responsible for governance should ensure that they:

- build on work to improve writing in the early years so that the proportion of children reaching a good level of development moves closer to the national

average

- continue to diminish differences between the attainment of disadvantaged pupils and the others by the end of each key stage.

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

Yours sincerely

Nick Butt
Ofsted Inspector

Information about the inspection

During the inspection, I held meetings with you, other school leaders, four governors including the chair, and pupils. I held a telephone conversation with a representative of the local authority and with an independent adviser. We visited all classrooms. We also observed a rehearsal for the end-of-term production. I examined a range of documents, policies and assessment information. I considered 57 responses from parents to Ofsted's questionnaire, Parent View and 55 free-text responses and spoke to parents in the playground before school. I also noted responses by pupils and staff to their respective questionnaires.