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Miss Amelia Cripps
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Dear Miss Cripps

Short inspection of Northern Infant 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 March 2014.

This school continues to be good.

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

You are leading the school skilfully through a period of change following the recent retirement of the executive headteacher. You know the school well and are very ably supported by the head of school. Together, you recognise the school's strengths and you are successfully steering the school's ongoing improvement.

Children and staff are friendly and treat everyone with mutual respect, which contributes towards a happy and purposeful community. Pupils are enthusiastic to learn and they attend school well. Teaching staff know each pupil as an individual. Parents and carers praise the school's provision for pupils who have special educational needs and/or disabilities, including medical needs.

You are justly proud of the school's effective relationships between home and school, supported well by the daily opportunity for parents to join their child for the first 10 minutes of learning. Many parents enjoy this opportunity to find out how to support their child with mathematics, handwriting, phonics and reading. Parents recognise the school as having a 'family feel', which nurtures their child and enables them to make good social and academic progress. Parents say that they always feel welcome because the head of school and all staff make a point of being readily available to them. Parents appreciate how quickly their children settle into the

school. One parent, typical of many stated: 'From day one, our child has felt happy, safe and part of a huge school family. Confidence has blossomed, as has interaction with other children. We could not be happier watching our child grow in such a caring and nurturing environment.'

The school's previous inspection report recognised its many strengths, including the good quality of teaching. Inspectors asked leaders to ensure that teaching continues to improve and to develop the roles of middle leaders. Working with the federated junior school, you have made effective use of advisers and a local teaching school, to provide middle leaders and other teachers with high-quality training opportunities. The senior leadership team checks pupils' progress diligently to ensure that they make expected or better progress. Where pupils need to catch up by developing specific skills, teaching assistants offer well-targeted opportunities for extra teaching through 'interventions', most of which take place outside of the classroom. Additional support activities engage pupils positively because teaching assistants make them enjoyable.

There have been several recent changes to the governing body. Nevertheless, governors have an accurate overview of the school's current position. They are clear about the strengths they want to maintain but are open to the ideas that the incoming executive headteacher will shortly bring. The governing body is rapidly developing its expertise as a new team to challenge leaders and contribute systematically to the school's development.

Children typically enter the school in Reception with skills that are just below those typical for their age. During pupils' time at the school, they make effective progress. In 2016 and 2017, the proportion of pupils who attained the expected standard in reading, writing and mathematics was higher than the national average. Disadvantaged pupils achieve at least in line with other pupils from the same starting point, and sometimes better. Parents of service children value the input the school's emotional literacy support assistant gives. They say that it helps to allay any anxieties their child experiences during times when families are separated.

In recent years, there has been a decline in children's attainment at the end of Reception, particularly in reading. There has also been variable achievement in the Year 1 phonics check. Leaders' analysis of pupils' performance has alerted them to the need for teachers to take more account of pupils' actual progress and adapt learning tasks to meet pupils' needs more precisely. The head of school has effective skills to refine still further the school's current provision. You also have well-considered plans to develop the wider curriculum to enable pupils to make good progress across a broader range of subjects.

Safeguarding is effective.

Safeguarding is at the heart of the school's work. The leadership team has ensured that all safeguarding arrangements are fit for purpose and records are detailed and accurate. Governors have an effective overview of the school's systems and procedures for safeguarding, including the recruitment checks made on staff and

volunteers.

Staff, governors and volunteers are well trained in line with their roles. The federation's designated safeguarding leads ensure that staff training is regularly updated. Teachers are alert to any changes in pupils' behaviour that may indicate a concern. Teachers report concerns promptly to the school's designated safeguarding lead (DSL). The DSL encourages parents to access the help they need at an early stage, with the school's family support worker frequently offering a helpful first line of support. Parents are confident that the school keeps their child safe and pupils agree with this view. Pupils say that any teacher will help them if they have any worries and are confident that there is no bullying. They know about internet safety, including the importance of never sharing a password.

Inspection findings

During the inspection, I focused on three specific areas of the school's work. I explored with you: how well leaders ensure that the broad and balanced curriculum meets pupils' needs; the progress that Reception children are making; and pupils' progress in phonics and reading.

- You have rightly prioritised the need to develop the wider curriculum. You are seeking to build links between subjects as well as developing the skills and attitudes that are unique to each subject. Many subjects offer memorable experiences, with opportunities for visits, such as Beaulieu Motor Museum in support of the current 'Wacky Races' topic. An exciting range of after-school clubs encourages pupils to extend their learning beyond the school day. During the inspection, I saw the popularity of your cosmic yoga club and pupils' enjoyment of the session.
- Pupils also learn from interesting visitors, such as firefighters. Pupils remember these events keenly but they do not talk insightfully about the skills they are developing outside of reading, writing and mathematics. Their learning in some subjects lacks breadth. While the wider curriculum engages pupils, it lacks a sharp focus on subjects other than English and mathematics. You acknowledge that the drive has been to develop the core subjects to meet the increasing challenges introduced by the 2014 national curriculum.
- Subject leaders for English and mathematics support teachers' accurate assessments and plan lessons with them. This ensures that all classes experience similar content in these aspects of the curriculum. These leaders are well placed to work with the head of school to develop their roles further. They are aware that currently, teachers do not use information about pupils' learning precisely enough when planning pupils' classroom tasks.
- Helpfully, teachers have responded to the recent decline in Reception children's outcomes by enhancing provision to develop children's communication, literacy and language skills. Reception teachers talked to us in detail about their children's progress. There are encouraging signs that recent changes are having a positive impact on children's strong progress. Current assessment information shows that a high proportion of children are on track to achieve a good level of development.

- Reception teachers provide a balanced range of learning opportunities which encourage children's successful independence. You are aware that previously boys did not achieve as well as girls in reading and writing. Teachers have therefore skilfully adapted the environment to engage boys successfully to help them develop their literacy skills. For example, the current 'space' theme links the different areas of learning and aims to interest and appeal to all children, particularly boys, so they choose to read and write.
- Pupils' positive attitudes towards reading are a strength of the school. Teachers instill in pupils a passion for reading. Events such as turning the school into the Land of Oz helps pupils to live the excitement of books. Pupils learn phonics through lively lessons. Teachers offer pupils plenty of opportunities to develop their skills, including reading comprehension. When pupils meet a new word, they are curious to find out its meaning and, if they find a particular skill difficult, they have effective extra support to help them catch up.
- Parents value the school's invitation to help their child with phonics and reading. The school supports parents through their workshops, useful online resources and the 'open classroom' offer. Well-trained reading volunteers offer dedicated support for individual pupils. Leaders are very aware of individual pupils' skills and which pupils need further support with their phonic skills.

Next steps for the school

Leaders and those responsible for governance should ensure that:

- plans to develop the wider curriculum proceed at pace so that pupils enjoy learning and make progress across a broad range of subjects
- teachers use their assessments of pupils' learning to match classroom learning tasks more precisely to meet their needs.

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

Yours sincerely

Linda Jacobs
Ofsted Inspector

Information about the inspection

I met with you, the head of school and three members of the governing body. I spoke with a representative of the local authority on the telephone. I visited all classes to look at teaching and learning, either with you or the head of school. Together with leaders, I reviewed pupils' work in English, mathematics and topic. I met with the Reception teachers and discussed examples of children's work. I listened to reading in Year 2 and observed some intervention groups. I observed

pupils' behaviour around the school and met some pupils on the playground. I considered the five responses to Ofsted's staff survey and the 49 responses to Ofsted's online questionnaire, Parent View, as well as the 34 written comments from parents. I also spoke to several parents at the beginning of the day. I examined the school's safeguarding policies, procedures and the register of recruitment checks. I also reviewed a range of documents, including the school's self-evaluation, the improvement plan, assessment and attendance information and information on the school's website.