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Mr Darren Smith  
Headteacher  
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Dear Mr Smith

### **Short inspection of Headlands Primary School**

Following my visit to the school on 18 April 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.

The school's values of Determination, Achievement, Respect and Enjoyment (DARE) are displayed by pupils and are evident in all classrooms and corridors. You and the staff have created a learning environment that is stimulating and promotes learning in a wide range of subjects and topics. Polite and respectful pupils enjoy school and work hard. They told me that behaviour is good and that incidents of bullying are extremely rare. There is a fair and consistent approach to the management of pupils' conduct. One pupil told me, 'All the rules apply to all the school.'

The knowledgeable and dedicated leadership team supports you very well. Individual leaders are passionate about their area of responsibility. As a result, there have been recent improvements, for example in the teaching and assessment of phonics and increased challenge for the most able pupils in mathematics.

Your self-evaluation of the school's strengths and development areas is accurate. For example, you have rightly prioritised improvements in progress for the least able and disadvantaged pupils for this academic year. Your school improvement planning is detailed and contains relevant actions, timescales and monitoring opportunities. The governing body and the trust monitor the progress of the action plan closely. Consequently, you and the other leaders are held to account for the actions you take.

You have successfully addressed the areas for improvement identified at the last inspection. The inspector asked you to provide additional challenge for the most able pupils. As a result, in mathematics, teachers are now using assessment information accurately to ensure that the most able pupils are challenged effectively, for example in problem-solving and reasoning activities. In writing, the most able pupils are encouraged to use more complex punctuation and vocabulary during the 'deepen the moment' activity. Here, pupils use a purple pen to improve their writing before handing it in to the teacher. Pupils now have frequent opportunities to develop writing skills across a range of subjects. For example, in Year 6 history, pupils had recently written a letter as a Spartan, explaining to an Athenian how their lives are different.

The inspector asked that pupils produce the best standards of handwriting and presentation in all their work. In response, you have introduced an effective whole-school handwriting programme that pupils access on a daily basis. There is also a consistent approach to how pupils present the date and title to pieces of work. The vast majority of pupils now present their work well.

You have ensured that teachers now ask questions that help to challenge pupils' thinking by having this as a focus when senior leaders have observed lessons. Teachers have also received specific training in questioning and there are helpful questions for teachers to ask pupils on mathematics lesson plans.

Finally, the inspector asked that you introduce a consistent approach to the teaching of phonics for pupils in key stage 1. The leader responsible for developing the new scheme has done so systematically. All staff have received appropriate training and checks are made frequently on the quality of teaching and on the progress made by different groups of pupils. As a result, standards in the Year 1 phonics screening check have risen over recent years and are now above the national averages.

In the 2016 tests, the proportion of key stage 1 pupils achieving the expected standard in reading, writing and mathematics was broadly in line with the national average. In 2017, there was a slight drop in the proportion who achieved the expected standard in reading and mathematics. The proportion who achieved at a greater depth in reading, writing and mathematics increased in 2017.

In the 2016 tests, the proportion of key stage 2 pupils achieving the expected standard in writing and mathematics was broadly in line with the national average. The proportion who achieved the expected standard in reading was just below the national average. In 2017, the proportion of pupils achieving the expected standard increased in reading and writing but decreased slightly in mathematics. The proportion who achieved at a greater depth was in line for reading and writing and below the national average in mathematics.

Inspection evidence and assessment information, provided by you, suggest that the great majority of pupils are currently on track to be working at standards expected for their age by the end of this academic year.

## **Safeguarding is effective.**

The leadership team has ensured that all safeguarding arrangements are fit for purpose and records are detailed and of high quality. The knowledgeable safeguarding leaders and family support worker are trained well in, for example, spotting the signs of neglect, safer recruitment and the 'Prevent' duty.

Staff use the online safeguarding tool effectively to record any welfare concerns they have regarding pupils and families. There are good links with outside agencies, including the educational psychologist, the early help team, play therapists and local PCSOs (police community support officers.) I saw examples of outside support being requested swiftly by the safeguarding leaders. Consequently, pupils and families receive help promptly. You have provided e-safety parental workshops that have helped parents and carers understand the potential dangers to children when they are online.

You have ensured that all relevant checks are undertaken before adults can work or volunteer at the school.

Rates of absence and persistent absence have risen to be just above the national averages over recent years. A number of pupils are consistently late for school in the morning. You agreed with me that improvements in attendance and punctuality should be a next step for the school.

## **Inspection findings**

- You have effective systems in place to ensure that the majority of pupils, including the least able pupils, are making good progress. Pupil progress meetings occur frequently between teachers and senior leaders to discuss the progress pupils are making in reading, writing and mathematics. There are good links with outside agencies, including the educational psychologist and dyslexia consultant. Staff have received appropriate training, for example in autism awareness, pupil well-being, nurture and the implementation of behaviour strategies. Consequently, pupils who may be falling behind are given the help they need promptly to catch up.
- Teaching assistants are a strength. They help to deepen pupils' understanding by asking questions that challenge their thinking. They also understand the importance of allowing some activities to be completed solely by the pupils, therefore promoting their independence.
- The subject leaders for English have been successful in promoting reading throughout the school. The library has been updated and new books purchased. Pupils are now encouraged to 'dive in' at key stage 1, 'dive under' in Years 3 and 4 and 'dive deep' in Years 5 and 6. The librarian and an after-school book club have been successful in encouraging pupils to read more widely and often.
- Children in the early years get off to a good start. The learning environments both inside and outside are bright and stimulating and provide appropriate

opportunities for children to develop writing, number and creative skills. Frequent assessments are undertaken that are recorded online. Parents can and often do contribute information. As a result, teachers know the children well and can carefully plan for the next steps in learning. Transition into the Nursery and Reception classes is effective. For example, staff make home visits before children start at the school and there are opportunities for children and parents to visit the school during the summer term. In 2016 and 2017, the proportion of children achieving a good level of development was above the national average.

- You rightly requested an external review of the allocation and monitoring of the pupil premium funding. This was because in the 2016 and 2017 end of key stage 2 tests, the disadvantaged pupils made less progress than other pupils. Consequently, the pupil premium leader has ensured that disadvantaged pupils, including the most able disadvantaged pupils, receive extra support. For example, teachers and teaching assistants have daily 'check ins' with pupils to ensure that there are no issues, and new '20 day challenges' give pupils small targets to achieve in either reading, writing or mathematics. There has also been an increase in the number of disadvantaged pupils attending after-school clubs and activities. The pupil premium governor works closely with the leader to ensure that this group of pupils are achieving well. Inspection evidence shows that the disadvantaged pupils are currently making better progress than has previously been the case.
- The Woodlands Unit for pupils who have communication difficulties and autism spectrum disorder is a strength. The inclusion leader has ensured that pupils are taught effectively in an appropriate environment by well-trained staff. For example, Year 5 and Year 6 pupils were enjoying the challenge of writing and accurately calculating number sentences using coins. Consequently, the majority of these pupils are making good progress.
- Parents are generally supportive of the school. The majority of parents with whom I spoke before school and who responded to Ofsted's online questionnaire, Parent View, stated their child was happy, safe and making good progress. One parent commented, 'My children are receiving a well-rounded education that will set them on the path to be curious, independent learners.'
- The multi-academy trust, which runs the school, has been successful in offering a wide range of training, support and challenge to you, the staff and the governing body. Minutes from meetings show clearly that appropriate and challenging questions are asked of you and other leaders. Consequently, you are being held fully to account.
- Teachers cannot currently demonstrate the progress that pupils are making in subjects across the curriculum. You therefore agreed with me that this should be a next step in the development of the school.

## **Next steps for the school**

Leaders and those responsible for governance should ensure that:

- pupils' rates of absence and persistent absence are below the national averages and pupils consistently arrive on time for the start of the school day
- teachers accurately demonstrate pupils' progress in a wide variety of subjects and topics.

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

Peter Stonier  
**Her Majesty's Inspector**

## **Information about the inspection**

During the inspection, I held meetings with you, the deputy headteacher and the two assistant headteachers. I also met with the reading and writing, phonics and mathematics subject leaders, two members of the governing body, including the vice chair, the chief executive from the Northampton Primary Academy Trust (NPAT), and a group of eight pupils. I scrutinised a range of documents, including those relating to pupils' attainment, the school's improvement planning, self-evaluation and documents relating to safeguarding. I visited all year groups, including the Woodlands Unit for pupils who have communication difficulties and autism spectrum disorder to see the learning that was taking place. I spoke with pupils and looked at work in their books. I spoke with a number of parents as they brought their children to school in the morning and I took account of the views of parents through the 19 responses to the Ofsted online survey, Parent View. There were 35 responses to Ofsted's staff survey and no responses to Ofsted's pupil survey.