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Mrs Alison Dolan
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Dear Mrs Dolan

Short inspection of Kingsthorpe Grove 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 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. Since your recent appointment, you, together with your governors and senior staff, have quickly identified areas for improvement across the school and the resulting school development plan is rightly focused on raising attainment. Your leadership team understands the importance of driving faster progress for all groups of pupils and recognises there is more work to do to ensure that all pupils reach their full potential.

You, other staff and the governing body have created a culture where both parents and pupils feel safe and valued. All staff are welcoming and clearly care about pupils and the wider community. The school's provision for pupils with autism is a strength and is fully embedded in the life of the school. This provision benefits not only the pupils in the unit but those within the mainstream, giving them an understanding of the needs of others.

Pupils are confident and polite. They talk with enthusiasm about the school's resources, particularly the new library. Pupils conduct themselves extremely well around the school. They listen attentively in class and concentrate on their work. The curriculum increasingly offers the pupils greater challenge and excitement and supports the needs of the diverse community the school serves. Parents and pupils enjoy the visits the teachers organise.

Parents and carers are positive about the school. Most parents who spoke with me and responded to a recent school questionnaire said that their children are safe, happy and taught well. Parents particularly praised the school administration staff, recognising that they were always willing to offer help and support.

Governance is effective with secure monitoring procedures in place. The governing body constantly evaluates the school's performance information and is well informed. Governors know the school well and are able to support you as the new headteacher in driving improvements. Governors have more recently sought to recruit members who reflect the diverse nature of the school.

At the time of the last inspection, leaders were asked to improve teaching and raise standards by strengthening the challenge for the most able pupils. The information that you collect shows that the most able pupils are not yet making as much progress as they could. However, the work in some of their books and the more-challenging tasks they are set in some lessons show pupils are making faster progress than your information suggests. In the mathematics lessons I visited, I saw pupils being encouraged to think in depth to solve problems. The most able pupils clearly enjoy this level of challenge. However, for some, the extent of the challenge they receive is not consistent enough to ensure that they reach the standards of which they are capable.

Leaders were also asked to ensure high standards of presentation in pupils' work. Handwriting is a focus for improvement across the school. The impact on the presentation in pupils' books is apparent in the younger year groups but is not yet as evident in key stage 2.

Leaders have been effective in improving attendance. Attendance has improved and is currently broadly in line with the national average.

Safeguarding is effective.

All staff are highly vigilant of pupils' welfare. Staff and governors receive regular training and know the signs to be aware of when checking pupils' welfare. They know that any concerns they have about a pupil's well-being must be shared with the safeguarding leaders, who act quickly.

The leadership team has ensured that all safeguarding arrangements are fit for purpose. Safeguarding records are meticulously detailed and stored securely. The chair of the governing body makes regular checks to make sure they remain robust. Pupils know how to keep themselves safe in a range of situations, including when online. Pupils say behaviour is good in the school and incidents of bullying are rare and always dealt with by the staff. They confidently told me they feel safe and that, if needed, an adult will always help them. Your focus on pupils' mental health and well-being means pupils and families who are vulnerable receive timely advice from the inclusion team, who go the extra mile to ensure that families are well supported.

Inspection findings

- The proportion of pupils achieving the expected standards at the end of Year 2, in reading, writing and mathematics in 2017, was below the national averages. Work in pupils' books shows that many more pupils in Year 2 are currently on track to reach the expected standard by the end of the year. Teacher assessments are often conservative and do not provide a secure basis for setting challenging targets. Subject leaders have attended local meetings with other schools to moderate their assessments of pupils' work and, as a result, have gained a better understanding of how to assess pupils' work accurately.
- You recognise that not enough pupils make rapid progress across key stage 2, particularly the most able. However, work in some pupils' books shows clear signs of faster progress. For example, in Year 4, work on fractions demonstrated how pupils have developed a deep understanding in this area. Regular meetings to discuss pupils' progress, led by you and your senior staff, are helping teachers to understand how much progress pupils need to make to reach the standards of which they are capable. Current assessment data in Years 3 and 4 shows signs of improvement in the progress pupils are making.
- The progress of disadvantaged pupils is slower than that of non-disadvantaged pupils. The strong leadership of the inclusion team is ensuring that the progress of these pupils is improving. Disadvantaged pupils are supported well across the school. Smaller class sizes in Years 4, 5 and 6 in the mornings have helped teachers to target those pupils that need a greater level of support or challenge in lessons. An additional teacher in the afternoons has enabled you to plan interventions for pupils who need additional support.
- Pupils benefit from attending forest school, which is led by qualified leaders. This opportunity allows all pupils to explore learning in a different environment and you have seen pupils improve in confidence during these sessions. The breakfast club, led by caring and supportive staff, is aimed at supporting more vulnerable pupils and this is well received by the pupils who regularly attend.

Next steps for the school

Leaders and those responsible for governance should ensure that:

- they develop a culture of higher aspirations and expectations to encourage all pupils to reach their full potential
- the most able pupils are consistently challenged to reach the standards of which they are capable
- they use the pupil premium to full effect to ensure that disadvantaged pupils make as much progress as all other pupils in reading, writing and mathematics.

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

Yours sincerely

Rebecca Ellers
Ofsted Inspector

Information about the inspection

During this short inspection, I met with you, four members of the governing body including the chair, and the school administration staff. I had a telephone conversation with a representative of the local authority. I spoke with pupils as you and I visited classes together, including Nursery and the ASD (autistic spectrum disorder) unit, to observe learning. I also spoke with a group of Year 5 and 6 pupils and with several parents at the beginning of the day. I read with three pupils and considered views of parents through their responses to a recent school questionnaire. I met with subject leaders.

Together, we examined a sample of pupils' books. I scrutinised a range of school documentation, including that related to the safeguarding of pupils, and the school's improvement plan and self-evaluation summary.