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Mrs Amanda Abley
Headteacher
Aboyne Lodge Junior Mixed and Infant School
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Dear Mrs Abley

Short inspection of Aboyne Lodge Junior Mixed and Infant School

Following my visit to the school on 9 May 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 December 2014.

This school continues to be good.

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

You and your senior team have an unwavering commitment to meeting the needs of every pupil. Leaders and governors provide strong leadership and have a thorough understanding of what is required to ensure that the school continues to improve. School leaders base their actions on a secure evaluation of the school's strengths and areas for improvement. You lead the school by building an effective team. You develop the leadership skills of other staff. As a result, leaders at all levels play an effective part in addressing the needs of the school in a timely way. This has created a strong sense of collaboration among the staff team, who feel well supported in carrying out their roles.

The vast majority of parents and carers who responded to the online questionnaire, Parent View, stated that their children were happy at the school. Parents I spoke to informally at the end of the day were pleased with the school. Typical comments included the view that the school is, 'like a little community' and that 'this school has a caring spirit'.

Pupils behave well around the school and in lessons. We visited classes together and noted the calm and purposeful atmosphere. We saw pupils working cooperatively, sharing ideas to help solve mathematical problems and discussing the meaning of words to help improve their vocabulary. You have introduced strategies to improve learning attitudes and resilience. During the inspection, I found that these are working well. For example, pupils can talk about the strategies they have been taught and can give

examples of how these help them with their learning. They like to be recognised as a 'tough tortoise' for never giving up or a 'buddy bee' for working well with others.

Following the previous inspection, leaders were asked to improve teaching so that more pupils reach the highest levels of attainment. In 2017, the proportion of pupils at key stage 1 attaining greater depth was above national averages in reading, writing and mathematics. More pupils attained the higher standards in reading and writing compared to the national average as seen in the 2017 key stage 2 test results. However, not enough pupils reached the expected or higher standards in mathematics and this is a priority in your plans for improvement.

Governors are ambitious for the school. They have developed plans and use them effectively to make best use of their skills and expertise. Governors have a secure knowledge of the school's strengths and priorities. They ask challenging questions, especially about the achievement of pupils. This is helping to hold you to account for the progress that pupils make.

Safeguarding is effective.

Leaders have ensured that procedures for safeguarding are fit for purpose. You ensure that appropriate checks are made for the suitability of all staff who work with children. Governors regularly monitor the effectiveness of safeguarding procedures to ensure that records meet statutory requirements. Staff are well trained and understand their role in keeping pupils safe at school. Regular updates keep staff informed and knowledgeable about identifying and reporting concerns. Good induction processes ensure that new staff receive the information they require about safeguarding.

Pupils feel safe at school. They are taught how to keep themselves safe and what to do if they are worried or concerned about anything. Pupils are confident that if they speak to their teachers they will sort out the problem. Parents' views were also positive. The overwhelming majority who responded to Parent View agreed that pupils are safe and well cared for at school.

Inspection findings

- At the start of the inspection, I met with you and your senior leaders to agree the key lines of enquiry. First, I considered what actions leaders were taking to improve pupils' progress in writing at key stage 2 so that a higher proportion of pupils attain the expected standard. Second, I checked to find out how leaders had responded to the dip in standards in mathematics at key stage 2 in 2017. Finally, I wanted to know how leaders ensured that the additional funding for disadvantaged pupils supported their progress across the school.
- To improve pupils' writing skills, leaders have focused on improving pupils' understanding and use of grammar, spelling and punctuation. Good-quality training and support have been provided to improve teachers' subject knowledge. This has been effective and teachers' knowledge of this area is now good. You have introduced specific lessons for the teaching of these skills. Pupils understand how to use them correctly within their written work. Targeted spelling tasks challenge different groups,

helping them to make good progress in spelling words correctly.

- Work in pupils' English books shows a good grasp of writing for a range of purposes. Pupils make appropriate word choices to write for specific audiences. Teachers plan a clear sequence of activities so that pupils build on previous knowledge, culminating in a final piece of extended writing. Pupils' editing skills are improving. You expect pupils to check their work and correct spelling errors.
- I found that pupils' writing skills are not as consistent in other subjects as they are in English. For example, in their written work in topic and science, some pupils do not use the same strategies as they do in English and do not readily address spelling errors. Your leaders acknowledge that there is more to be done to ensure that writing is of a similar standard across the curriculum.
- In 2017, the proportion of pupils at key stage 2 attaining expected and high standards in mathematics were below the national figures. Too few pupils had made good progress from key stage 1 to key stage 2. Leaders acted swiftly by reviewing the curriculum and identifying particular mathematical skills where pupils struggled and found that there were gaps in their learning.
- You invested in training and teachers' skills in teaching mathematics are improving. Teachers devise lessons that develop pupils' reasoning and problem-solving skills. For example, during the inspection, we saw younger pupils mapping out calculations in the form of patterns to prove different calculations made the same amount. You are making use of subject experts from a local secondary school. They provide additional lessons to deepen mathematical thinking for the most able pupils in Year 6. Standards are rising and pupils are beginning to show a greater understanding of mathematical concepts. However, work in pupils' books shows that the challenge for some pupils, particularly the most able, is not timely and supporting rapid progress.
- Leaders have a clear understanding of the barriers that affect disadvantaged pupils. You and your leaders identify the needs of each individual pupil. You quickly identify appropriate support to help pupils catch up. You speak to the pupils and consider their responses, helping you to evaluate the impact of your plans. Leaders reflect carefully about the specific support, whether academic or social, and how it will contribute to diminishing differences between disadvantaged pupils and their peers. Disadvantaged pupils have similar expectations and aspirations to their classmates. Their work in books is similar to other pupils and shows that pupils are making good progress from their starting points.

Next steps for the school

Leaders and those responsible for governance should ensure that:

- new approaches to the teaching of mathematics are embedded so that pupils, especially the most able, are challenged and stretched in their thinking
- pupils apply their writing skills across the curriculum to the same standard as in their English books.

I am copying this letter to the chair of the governing body, the regional schools

commissioner and the director of children's services for Hertfordshire. This letter will be published on the Ofsted website.

Yours sincerely

Steve Mellors
Her Majesty's Inspector

Information about the inspection

During the inspection, I spoke with you and your leadership team to discuss your strengths and areas for improvement. I also met the leaders who have responsibility for English, mathematics and disadvantaged pupils. I spoke with representatives from the governing body, including the chair of the governing body. I spoke with your school improvement partner. I met with eight pupils to discuss their learning. I visited each key stage with you, where I observed teaching of English and mathematics and spoke to pupils as well as looking at their work. I also looked at pupils' written work in different subjects.

I took account of 133 responses to Parent View, the Ofsted online questionnaire, including free-text responses. I looked at 28 staff questionnaires. I reviewed information, including the school's summary evaluation, the pupil premium strategy and records of teaching and learning. I also evaluated safeguarding procedures, including policies to keep pupils safe, safeguarding checks and risk assessments. I undertook a review of the school's website.