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20 July 2018

Mrs Sarah Garrett
Headteacher
Sheldwich Primary School
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Dear Mrs Garrett

No formal designation inspection of Sheldwich Primary School

Following my visit with Catherine Old, Her Majesty's Inspector and Andrew Hogarth, Ofsted Inspector to your academy on 10 July 2018, I write on behalf of Her Majesty's Chief Inspector of Education, Children's Services and Skills to confirm the inspection findings.

This monitoring inspection was conducted under section 8 of the Education Act 2005 and in accordance with Ofsted's published procedures for inspecting schools with no formal designation. The inspection was carried out because Her Majesty's Chief Inspector was concerned about pupils' outcomes following a reported decline in pupils' progress in reading and mathematics in key stage 2 in 2017.

Evidence

Inspectors met with you, senior and middle leaders, and the chair of governors. Inspectors observed learning in eight classes including the Nursery, all jointly with senior leaders, and looked at pupils' work. Inspectors analysed a range of the school's documentation, including information about pupils' achievement and the school improvement plan. We discussed your evaluation of the school's effectiveness. Inspectors considered the 59 responses to Ofsted's online survey, Parent View, and spoke to parents at the end of the day. Inspectors met with pupils at breaktime and gathered the views of several pupils throughout the day. Inspectors scrutinised the single central record and other documents relating to safeguarding and child protection arrangements.

Having considered the evidence I am of the opinion that at this time:

Leaders and governors have taken effective action to maintain the high standards of pupils' outcomes identified at the previous section 5 inspection.

Context

Since the previous inspection, the majority of staff, including the headteacher and deputy headteacher, have remained in post. The school has opened a nursery provision in a building on the school site. Recently, governors and leaders have joined a local consortium of schools to share knowledge, expertise and to moderate their judgements and evaluations.

Inspection findings

You lead the school with passion and enthusiasm. Since the time of the last inspection you have been unwavering in your ambition to meet the needs of children and families in this rural community. The addition of the 'Little Hedgehogs' Nursery is particularly successful and parents appreciate the great start their children receive. One parent noted: 'The staff here are caring, compassionate and inspiring; a dream team.'

Pupils are remarkably well behaved, polite and enthusiastic. They rarely miss a day of school and show positive attitudes towards their learning in class. Pupils adore the wide range of clubs and activities they can participate in, such as chess and lacrosse. In class, pupils work with interest and drive. They enjoy the opportunity to discuss their thinking with friends yet are equally adept at working independently when it is time to knuckle down. As a result, pupils are highly productive and make great progress.

You have thought carefully about making sure that the curriculum is lively and interesting and helps to prepare pupils exceptionally well for the next stage of their education. You use the abundant outdoor space to enhance pupils' learning. For example, when studying the Roman army, pupils in Year 4 cooked food around a fire pit and designed, built and used their own Roman shields. These first-hand experiences give pupils the opportunity to explore subjects in depth and think carefully about their learning.

Leaders' work to promote pupils' spiritual, moral, social and cultural education is exceptionally strong. Positive behaviour is celebrated and rewarded in weekly assemblies. Parents from a range of ethnic and religious backgrounds visit the school regularly to help teach children about different beliefs and cultures. Recently, pupils took part in the 'plastic-free Faversham' initiative, making pledges to reduce their reliance on plastic straws and cups. Others raised funds for those less fortunate than themselves thus helping to support a local hospital ward, food bank and a school in Suchana, India. These opportunities allow pupils to reflect deeply on their place in the world and are liberally woven into the rich and tolerant ethos of the school.

Writing is a key strength of the school. Pupils write lively and interesting texts which demonstrate their advanced grasp of grammar, spelling and punctuation. This is not confined to English lessons; it also allows pupils to explain, hypothesise and

persuade in a range of other subjects. For example, pupils in Year 6 wrote excellent geographical reports about the tectonic plates, recording in detail the physical processes that lead to the formation of volcanoes and earthquakes. Most pupils write at the expected standard for their age, with many writing above the expected standard.

Leaders skilfully evaluate the strengths and relative weaknesses of the school. They use their detailed and accurate understanding to create sharply focused development plans which seek to improve pupils' outcomes in all areas of the curriculum. For example, in 2017, you acted swiftly and highly effectively to address a dip in standards in reading. You revitalised the school's curriculum so that pupils read highly challenging texts. Teachers' judicious use of questioning ensures that pupils are able to explain their understanding of what they are reading to an advanced level. As a result, pupils' progress in reading has accelerated dramatically. Leaders are rightly strengthening their links with other schools, to ensure that teaching and leadership are of consistently high standards.

Pupils, including those who are disadvantaged, make excellent progress in mathematics. They develop secure fluency and calculation skills and can articulate their thinking well. Pupils solve complex tasks in mathematics because their teachers know exactly how to challenge and support them. The new systems for promoting pupils' reasoning skills are well judged and help pupils to think deeply. You rightly recognise that these are yet to be fully embedded across the school.

Governors visit often to check the work of the school. Their visits are sharply focused, and their findings and recommendations are reported back to the whole governing body. For example, governors monitor the use of sports premium funding and additional funding for pupils who have special educational needs and/or disabilities to satisfy themselves that they have secured good value for money. Governors' actions are firmly focused on improving the outcomes for pupils. They are very well placed to secure further improvement.

The arrangements for safeguarding are effective. Statutory checks are made on all staff before they commence employment. Staff receive thorough induction and refresher training to ensure that keeping children safe is everyone's top priority. When concerns do arise, leaders get families the support they need, working with external agencies when appropriate. Pupils know how to keep safe, for example by using the internet and electronic devices responsibly and respectfully. Pupils told inspectors that they feel they have an adult to turn to if they have worries or concerns.

Priorities for further improvement

- Accelerate pupils' progress so that an even greater proportion of pupils attain at a high standard in 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 Kent. This letter will be published on the Ofsted website.

Yours sincerely

Daniel Lambert
Her Majesty's Inspector