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8 October 2018

Mr Jonathan Rice
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Dear Mr Rice

Short inspection of Caister Junior School

Following my visit to the school on 26 September 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. You have developed a calm and purposeful atmosphere with a focus on pupils' well-being and academic achievements in this fully inclusive school.

Since your appointment in September 2017, there have been a number of changes in leadership. Governors value your leadership skills, but you acknowledge that your long-term absence during your first year held back some of the initiatives you wished to put in place. However, since April 2018, through a robust school development plan, new strategies are beginning to have a positive impact. For example, a new approach to teaching writing is supporting high standards across the school. The presentation of pupils' work in books and on displays is improving swiftly. You and your governors spend additional funding effectively so that disadvantaged pupils and those who have special educational needs (SEN) and/or disabilities perform well.

Pupils told me they enjoy coming to school and that learning is fun. This is aiding good attendance. They spoke positively about the new challenges they can choose to develop their learning. Pupils feel proud when they move from one challenge to a more difficult one. Those who spoke to me say that bullying is not a problem in the school and that there are adults around to discuss any concerns. Most parents who responded to the Ofsted online survey, Parent View, agreed that their child is safe and happy in school and that they would recommend the school to other families.

Leaders have recently reviewed the curriculum and all year groups are studying 'beaches, seas and oceans'. Pupils enthusiastically, discussed their visit to the beach and the sculptures they produced. This theme links well with the school's work to support the local lifeboat and become recognised as a 'Beach School'. We observed highly motivated pupils discussing the 'sounds of the sea' and comparing land mass to surface water in the world. They also danced to sea shanties and researched information about the Bermuda Triangle and the Mariana Trench. Such challenges, and the exciting curriculum, are engaging pupils in their learning to improve the progress they make, effectively addressing the issue raised in the previous inspection report.

You enable teachers to plan together and work with staff from other schools to share and benefit from each other's skills. This was an area to develop from the previous inspection. You are working more closely with the staff at the nearby infant school to ensure a smoother transition for pupils from Year 2 into Year 3. The new Year 3 pupils have settled successfully into junior school life.

Appropriately, you and your leaders are focusing on improving teaching, learning and assessment, in order to accelerate pupils' progress in reading and mathematics, especially the progress of the most able pupils. You acknowledge that a greater proportion of pupils should reach the higher standard in these subjects. From September 2018, a new teaching team has been working to improve the learning for current Year 6 pupils. The school's new assessment system, which was implemented last term, is giving leaders, teachers and governors more detailed information about pupils' outcomes. Underachievers can be identified early, so that you can put effective support in place more swiftly to help these pupils catch up in their learning. However, you recognise that robust and regular analysis of information, using this new system, is at an early stage of implementation for middle leaders.

Safeguarding is effective.

Leaders have developed an effective culture for safeguarding pupils at the school so that all arrangements are fit for purpose. Staff and governors have had recent training, which includes the latest guidance from the September 2018 version of 'Keeping children safe in education'. The single central register is compliant and securely maintained. Staff are appropriately checked before working at the school. Where pupils require higher levels of support from external agencies, staff engage in appropriate communication and pursue the progress of agreed actions.

The school's new behaviour strategies and policy are improving pupils' behaviour around school and their attitudes to learning. Governors, staff and pupils told me that pupils' behaviour has improved rapidly since your appointment. Your thorough behavioural journals show that the number of incidents is decreasing. Well-trained staff meet the needs of vulnerable pupils, through high-quality provision in the 'house' and the nurture rooms. Pastoral mentors support these pupils well, to help them remain in mainstream education wherever possible. When required, you follow exclusion procedures rigorously.

Inspection findings

- My first line of enquiry was to investigate what leaders have done to address the decline in pupils' outcomes in mathematics from the end of key stage 1 to the end of key stage 2. I wanted to check the progress of current pupils in mathematics. The leader of mathematics has recently undertaken specialist training and produced a new calculation policy. She is supporting teachers and teaching assistants to implement new teaching strategies, which focus on developing pupils' understanding of mathematical concepts. The recent arrival of practical resources is enhancing this approach.
- We observed pupils choosing their mathematical challenges appropriately and quickly. Pupils' books show how they have moved from one challenge to a harder one swiftly, so that no time in their learning has been wasted. Consequently, all groups of pupils are being challenged well in mathematics across the school, including the most able. Additionally, we could see clear progression of skills throughout the school and a consistency of learning opportunities within each year group.
- Senior leaders completed a robust analysis of 2018 test papers to identify precisely where there were gaps in pupils' learning. This highlighted weaknesses in fractions and decimals. The mathematics leader is ensuring a greater emphasis on these concepts this year to fill in any gaps in pupils' learning and to deepen their understanding.
- The school's new assessment system shows that most current pupils are on track to make the progress they should from their starting points on joining the school. This also indicates that the current Year 6 pupils are making better progress than those previously, including the most able pupils.
- My second area of enquiry looked at the school's provision for reading. This was because the provisional results of statutory assessments of Year 6 in 2018 indicate a decline in pupils' outcomes. I wanted to see how leaders were tackling this issue. You and the new English leaders were disappointed with these results, especially those for the most able pupils. The school's latest assessment information indicates that most current pupils are making the progress that they should, and a greater proportion of the most able pupils are working at the higher standard.
- Staff are implementing a variety of strategies to improve pupils' reading and comprehension skills across the school. Since January 2018, a new reading initiative has been used to improve pupils' skills of inference and deduction and enhance their understanding of more difficult texts. This is enabling current Year 6 pupils to make faster progress in these skills. Additionally, teachers are building up pupils' stamina and pace in reading across the school because in assessments in 2018 some Year 6 pupils did not complete the reading paper.
- The school's new writing system, with its focus on high-quality books and enriched vocabulary, is also supporting pupils' reading skills. The Year 6 pupils who read to me read with fluency and confidence. A recent investment in exciting library books is enhancing pupils' enjoyment of reading.

- My final line of enquiry was to ascertain if the leadership team has the capacity to ensure further school improvement. Leaders and governors have accurately evaluated the school's strengths and areas to develop. Well-focused plans with tight milestones are moving actions forward. New initiatives are beginning to show an early impact in improving teaching, learning and assessment, and the progress pupils make. Senior leaders have analysed pupils' performance robustly through the new assessment system. Governors have a greater understanding of pupils' outcomes and ask more challenging questions about standards.
- You are strengthening the skills of new senior, subject and year group leaders and supporting teachers in the early stages of their career well. Leaders at all levels are improving teaching and learning across the school. However, the middle leaders have yet to use the school's new assessment system regularly and robustly to ensure that pupils make the best possible progress over time.

Next steps for the school

Leaders and those responsible for governance should ensure that:

- the challenges pupils select for themselves enable them, especially the most able, to make the best possible progress across the curriculum
- middle leaders build up their skills, especially in analysing pupils' assessment information, so that they drive school improvement within their areas of responsibility.

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

Yours sincerely

Julie Harrison
Ofsted Inspector

Information about the inspection

During the inspection, I met with you, other leaders, governors and a representative of the local authority. I spoke to a group of pupils. I looked at a range of documentation, including information about the school's self-evaluation and plans for future improvement. Additionally, I examined policies and procedures for safeguarding pupils, including the school's single central record of pre-employment checks on staff. I visited all classrooms in the school to observe pupils' learning and scrutinise the work in pupils' books. The views of 41 parents who responded to Ofsted's online questionnaire, Parent View, were taken into account, along with the written views of 20 parents from the free-text service.