

29 November 2018

Gary Kemp
Headteacher
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Dear Mr Kemp

Short inspection of North Kidlington Primary School

Following my visit to the school on 20 November 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 last inspection.

At the time of this inspection, you were not in school and, during this interim period, the deputy headteacher has taken on your role.

The deputy headteacher leads the school with determination and high expectations. Staff value her clear leadership, which ensures that they understand the school's goals. Staff morale is high. The deputy headteacher is relentless in her focus on school improvement. She is very reflective about the decisions that she is making while the school is in her care. One parent wrote, confirming the views of many, 'She is passionate and ambitious for her pupils.'

Pupils told me that they enjoy coming to North Kidlington because their teachers are kind and 'help us when we are struggling'. They love many aspects of school life, including the playground equipment, sporting opportunities, and the wide variety of school trips that they go on. Parents and carers confirmed how happy their children are at the school and how well the staff know their children. As one parent wrote: 'There is a very positive atmosphere, where all children are known well, valued, cared for, encouraged, taught well and praised for their varied achievements at all levels.' All parents who responded to the Ofsted online questionnaire, Parent View, would recommend the school.

The previous inspection report highlighted many strengths in the school, including

strong early years provision, effective governance and well-behaved pupils. During my visit, classrooms were calm and focused on learning. Pupils understand and follow the behaviour policy well. Pupils who need help with their behaviour choices, and pupils with special educational needs and/or disabilities (SEND), are supported well. As a result, pupils with SEND make good progress in the school.

At the time of the previous inspection, leaders were asked to strengthen the skills of middle leaders. This has been very successfully accomplished. Middle leaders are improving the quality of teaching and learning well in their areas of responsibility. Leaders were also asked to improve teaching so that more pupils achieve well. Provisional performance information indicates that pupils' attainment at the end of key stage 2 is similar to the national picture. Leaders agreed that the progress that pupils make in mathematics by the end of key stage 1 is not as strong as it should be. Improving the progress and attainment of current pupils in writing is also a key focus for school improvement.

Safeguarding is effective.

School leaders and governors fulfil their statutory safeguarding duties well. They have ensured that staff are trained regularly, with weekly safeguarding soundbites in addition to more formal safeguarding training. As a result of this effective and frequent training, a culture of vigilance permeates the school. All pupils, including the most vulnerable pupils, are well supported. Policies and procedures are fit for purpose and day-to-day routines are secure. Records, including the single central record of checks on adults' suitability to work and volunteer at the school, are diligently maintained. You work successfully with local agencies to be sure that the needs of pupils and their families are addressed effectively. Leaders regularly check that the school's safeguarding processes remain robust, for example through safeguarding quizzes for all staff.

Pupils said that behaviour is mainly good in the school and that they feel safe in school. They say that if bullying were to happen, 'the teachers will sort it out for you'. They have great faith that teachers will listen and act on any worries that they may have.

Inspection findings

- At the beginning of the inspection, we agreed that we would focus on: how well teaching ensures strong progress in writing, including that of disadvantaged pupils; how well leaders ensure strong progress in mathematics in key stage 1; and how leaders and governors ensure that the school continues to improve.
- Provisional performance information for the end of key stage 2 in 2018 indicates that pupils made above average rates of progress in mathematics. However, leaders quite rightly acknowledge that outcomes for the end of key stage 1, for the past few years, are not strong enough. During my visits to mathematics lessons, and while looking at pupils' books, I saw clear evidence that misconceptions are anticipated and addressed swiftly. Pupils have a secure understanding of the number system and place value. They make effective use of

practical apparatus to support their learning. Leaders rightly recognise, however, that pupils in key stage 1 require more regular opportunities to improve their reasoning and problem-solving skills.

- Teachers plan exciting English sessions and, as a result, pupils are highly engaged in their learning. Pupils enjoy their tasks and are able to confidently explain grammatical errors and the use of specific features, such as rhetorical questions. They were also secure in how to write a formal letter. Teachers model their expectations well and, as a result, pupils know what is expected of them.
- Effective professional development provision, including that for teaching assistants, has ensured that the quality of teaching of writing is high. Disadvantaged pupils make good progress in writing across the school. However, due to some underachievement in the past, there are some stark gender gaps in attainment in writing. Not enough girls are attaining the higher standards. The attainment of some boys in some year groups is too low. During the scrutiny of pupils' work in writing, leaders acknowledged that there is still work to do to ensure that pupils' basic skills are consistently high across the school. Ensuring that all pupils make more progress in writing, with a sharp focus on basic skills, including grammar, punctuation, handwriting and spelling, is an ongoing focus for the school.
- Recent streamlining of assessment procedures in mathematics and writing has ensured that assessment is focused on what is useful for identifying the next steps in learning. As a result, there is an improved knowledge among staff of gaps in learning. Any pupil who is falling behind is swiftly identified, and support and intervention are put in place. This additional support is reviewed regularly to ensure that it is having the required impact. As one governor said, 'No child slips through the net at North Kidlington.'
- The deputy headteacher has been relentless in her determination that standards will not slip while you are absent. The local authority has offered her effective support and advice during this interim period, which has resulted in the smooth running of the school and expectations being clear. The deputy headteacher has a clear and accurate view of what the school does well and what could be even better. She is well supported by knowledgeable middle leaders who have taken appropriate action to improve pupils' performance in their subjects.
- Governance is strong. Governors have a deep level of commitment to the school. They support and challenge leaders effectively and confirm what leaders tell them through regular visits to the school. Governors are highly ambitious that every child will succeed during their time at North Kidlington.

Next steps for the school

Leaders and those responsible for governance should ensure that:

- pupils are routinely and effectively taught to reason and solve problems in mathematics so that a higher proportion of pupils meet and exceed age-related expectations at the end of key stage 1
- pupils' rates of progress increase in writing so that more pupils meet and exceed

age-related expectations.

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

Yours sincerely

Lea Hannam
Ofsted Inspector

Information about the inspection

During the inspection, I met with the deputy headteacher to discuss the school's effectiveness. Together, we visited classrooms to observe pupils' learning, talk to pupils and look at their work. We also looked at the quality of work in a wide range of pupils' books. I considered the 38 responses from parents to the online questionnaire, Parent View, including free-text comments. I also spoke to parents at the beginning of the school day. Responses to Ofsted's staff and pupil questionnaires were considered and I had a meeting with a group of pupils to discuss their views about the school.

I met with eight governors, including the chair of the governing body, and also spoke on the telephone to a representative of the local authority. In addition, I met with a group of middle leaders. I evaluated the school's safeguarding arrangements. A wide range of documents was examined, including: the school's self-evaluation; school improvement planning; information about pupils' progress; and various policies. I also examined the school's website.