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7 December 2018

Mrs Rachel Moreton
Headteacher
The Middle Rasen Primary School
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Dear Mrs Moreton

Short inspection of The Middle Rasen Primary School

Following my visit to the school on 21 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 October 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, together with governors, are addressing the recent dip in pupils' standards by the end of Year 6. You have improved the quality of teaching and you are strengthening the curriculum. You act well upon external advice in order to maintain continued improvement. Governors are committed to moving the school forward and have established strong links with school leaders.

Your school is a welcoming and attractive place where pupils' personal and academic achievements are celebrated. This is valued by parents and carers, as typified by this parental comment, 'My children make good progress academically and get many opportunities that enhance their learning.'

Staff motivate pupils to learn through interesting tasks and topics. For example, during my visit, pupils in the Year 3 and 4 class explained to me how their learning about medieval times inspired them to write and find out more. Work in books shows that pupils write for a range of purposes and staff focus on improving grammar, punctuation and spelling. In all the classes we visited together there was a buzz of activity as pupils busily engaged in their learning.

You and your staff make sure that pupils are interested in reading. You have established an attractive library area and offer a good range of reading material. When I listened to pupils read, they told me they like reading and they read frequently. They used their knowledge about phonics to tackle new words and they

were able to explain the plot and the characters' actions. You are now working on increasing pupils' understanding and interpretation of what they read so that a greater proportion of pupils develop higher-level reading skills.

Your evaluation of the effectiveness of the mathematics curriculum has led to the introduction of a new whole-school approach, with a much greater focus on developing pupils' reasoning skills. When we visited classes together, we saw this in action as pupils applied what they knew to solve problems. This approach is speeding up pupils' progress. However, it is too new to yet see the full impact on pupils' attainment overall.

You and your staff check the progress pupils make frequently. You use the information to decide which pupils need extra help to catch up and which pupils could do better. You look at pupils' books to ensure that the work is neither too hard nor too easy. One of your main priorities currently is to ensure that the most able pupils continue to build upon the good gains they make in key stage 1 as they move through key stage 2.

Since the previous inspection, you have increased the opportunities for staff to share expertise with each other and with staff from other schools. This helps to develop teaching skills and to ensure that the assessment of pupils' work is accurate. Within school, you make good use of staff to help pupils who need to catch up. After a time of some staffing changes, you are now developing more fully the leadership roles of those responsible for English and mathematics.

Also, since the previous inspection, you have developed the curriculum, enhanced by trips to outside locations and visitors to the school, to widen pupils' understanding of others beyond the school community and to promote important values of respect and tolerance.

Safeguarding is effective.

You, your staff and governors work together to keep pupils safe and ensure that the school's systems and safeguarding arrangements are fit for purpose. You keep detailed records of any child protection concerns and work with external agencies to resolve any issues that may arise.

Staff are well informed about the school's systems and know how to report any worries they may have about pupils' welfare. The systems to check the suitability of adults who work with pupils are thorough.

Pupils say they feel safe in school and parents agree. Leaders make sure that the curriculum helps pupils to understand how to keep themselves safe in school and the wider environment. Regular anti-bullying and e-safety learning raises the pupils' awareness of the different forms that bullying may take. Visitors to the school, such as the NSPCC and the Stay Safe partnership, provide extra guidance to pupils.

Inspection findings

- Leaders' actions have halted the slide in standards and progress seen by the end of Year 6 in 2018. Their thorough evaluation of the curriculum has led to improvements. They check the quality of teaching and the progress pupils make frequently to ensure that all pupils now make at least good progress. The school's information shows that the pupils currently in Year 6 are on track to achieve better than previously in reading, writing and mathematics.
- In 2018, not enough pupils reached the higher levels by the end of Year 6. There is now a clear focus on ensuring that teaching develops pupils' comprehension skills in reading. This is strengthening pupils' understanding and increasing the proportion working at the higher levels.
- In mathematics, staff provide tasks which challenge pupils to use what they know and to explain their reasoning. This approach is relatively new but it is helping pupils to work at greater depth.
- The most able pupils now build more strongly upon their previous learning as work is well pitched to their abilities. Their good progress remains one of the school's main priorities.
- Pupils with special educational needs and/or disabilities, as well as those from disadvantaged backgrounds, who need to catch up receive extra adult help with their learning and social development. The progress of individual pupils is carefully tracked by leaders and staff to ensure that teaching enables them to achieve as well as they can.
- Leaders monitor pupils' attendance and absence. Current figures show that attendance is now above average and the number of pupils who stay away from school frequently has reduced dramatically. Incentives and rewards promote good attendance. Leaders work with external agencies to help parents to see the effect of poor attendance on their children's learning.

Next steps for the school

Leaders and those responsible for governance should ensure that:

- the teaching of mathematics continues to strengthen pupils' reasoning and mastery
- the most able pupils build well upon what they already know and can do
- more pupils than previously reach the higher levels in English 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 Lincolnshire. This letter will be published on the Ofsted website.

Yours sincerely

Vivienne McTiffen
Ofsted Inspector

Information about the inspection

During the inspection, I met with you and the leader responsible for special educational needs. We looked at the school's progress information and discussed ways in which the quality of teaching is checked. With you, I visited all classes to observe the teaching of English and mathematics. I met the chair of the governing body and three other governors. I spoke to pupils during lessons about their work and I looked at a sample of pupils' books. I also met with a group of pupils and they showed me examples of their writing and mathematics. I listened to pupils read and I observed activities at lunchtime. I took into account the 28 responses to Ofsted's online questionnaire, Parent View, and written comments submitted by parents. I analysed the nine responses to the questionnaire completed by staff and the nine responses to the pupil survey. I scrutinised the single central record of recruitment checks, looked at documentation relating to safeguarding and discussed the school's safeguarding procedures with you and staff. I also looked at the school's self-evaluation and the school development plan.