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Mr Edward Petrie
Headteacher
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Dear Mr Petrie

Short inspection of New Swannington Primary School

Following my visit to the school on 6 February 2019, 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 March 2015.

This school continues to be good.

The leadership team has maintained the good quality of education in the school since the last inspection. The school's vision for the pupils to 'become well rounded, independent, life-long learners' sits at the heart of the leadership team's work.

The great majority of parents I met spoke very positively about the school. Most of all, they appreciate and value the school's openness and communication. Parents also spoke positively about how pupils who are new to the school settle very well, how any minor issues are sorted out quickly and how much parents appreciate the wide range of extra-curricular opportunities that are available.

During the inspection I saw for myself how the school works hard to support parents and families when things are difficult, in particular through the work of the school's family link worker. One parent commented, 'My son has had a difficult year and the school has been amazing with supporting him when he has needed it... they have also been amazing with offering me help and advice so that we're all working together to get him to a better place.'

The pupils enjoy coming to school. They told me how much they enjoy all the sporting activities and the clubs after school. They described the lessons as fun and interesting. The recent introduction of a 'creative curriculum' has sparked pupils' enthusiasm to learn. One girl told me that she wanted to do her 'best writing' because she was learning about something that she was interested in.

Our scrutiny of pupils' work confirmed the care and pride that pupils take in their written work. The members of the school council were proud of the money that they had raised for various charities. They relish the responsibilities that are available to them, for example the sports council organising the school sports day and older pupils teaching playground games and sports to younger pupils.

In all the classes we observed together, pupils' behaviour was positive. They were all listening carefully, concentrating hard, persevering if the work was challenging and cooperating very well with one another. Their behaviour at other times, for example moving around school or in the dinner-hall, was also exemplary. They were polite and friendly. Pupils told me that incidents of poor behaviour are rare, and any problems are dealt with effectively by the staff. My scrutiny of the school's behaviour log confirmed this.

School leaders have correctly identified that one of the key strengths in teaching is the teachers' use of careful questioning to check pupils' understanding and also to deepen it. In mathematics lessons, pupils are very accustomed to explaining their reasoning by responding to the question, 'How do you know?' However, school leaders' monitoring of teaching has identified that some lower-ability pupils and pupils with special educational needs and/or disabilities are not always being given enough opportunity to develop their independence. This is because adults working with them are sometimes too quick to intervene and provide answers or to do the work for them. This has been identified by school leaders as a priority area for staff training.

The proportion of pupils who meet or exceed the national standards in English and mathematics at the end of key stage 2 have increased steadily over the last three years. However, the proportion of most-able pupils in key stage 1 who reach greater depth, particularly in reading and writing, has been mostly below the national average for three years.

Governors are not holding school leaders closely enough to account. This is partly because school improvement plans are not sufficiently clear and precise about how the impact of planned changes will be measured. Governors need to check more carefully for themselves what is happening in school and whether it matches the information they receive in reports and at meetings.

The school has successfully addressed the areas for improvement identified at the last inspection. Because these were included in the lines of enquiry agreed with the headteacher, they are discussed in detail in the section on 'Inspection findings'.

Safeguarding is effective.

The pupils feel safe and they learn how to stay safe. They have learned to use computers safely and to cross roads safely. Bullying or racist name-calling hardly ever happen, but if they ever do, teachers deal with them quickly and well. Pupils know that if they ever have a concern or a worry they can always speak to a member of staff. 'They're all trusted adults', one pupil told me.

The systems for keeping children safe are well organised and effective. For example, the school has a large number of trained first-aiders, maintains careful records of accidents and carefully assesses the risks associated with different school activities. Levels of school attendance are high and very few pupils are persistently absent. The school has taken effective action to tackle and improve individual cases of poor attendance. The governor with responsibility for safeguarding carries out a comprehensive annual audit that includes talking to pupils. The school is in the process of changing over from a paper-based system of recording child-protection concerns to a computer-based system. It is essential that school leaders are vigilant in making sure that no information is lost during that process. The systems for ensuring that newly appointed staff receive full and appropriate safeguarding training in a timely manner need to be tightened up. School leaders should review the safeguarding policy to make sure that it more closely matches the needs of this school, these pupils and this community.

Inspection findings

- At the last inspection school leaders were asked to provide further challenge to the most able pupils. The improvements to teaching that school leaders have overseen have led to more pupils leaving the school having achieved greater depth in reading, writing and mathematics. Work in books shows that pupils are regularly challenged, especially in mathematics, and do not waste time on work that is too easy for them. Work is pitched at an appropriate level for pupils at different stages of their learning. In your regular pupil progress meetings, you always focus on higher-attaining pupils as well as on those who need to catch up.
- At the last inspection, school leaders were also asked to provide more opportunities for pupils to write at length and to make sure that they take as much care in their writing in other subjects as they do in English. Newly introduced approaches to writing, like 'slow write' have had a positive impact. School leaders have been determined to develop a culture of writing at the school, for example with 'Free Write Fridays' during which everyone in school writes. Scrutiny of the pupils' books shows that pupils have many opportunities to write at length across many different subjects. They nearly always take as much care in other subjects as they do in English.
- You have raised expectations of spelling, punctuation, grammar and handwriting, including clear 'non-negotiables' on these basics. Pupils take pride in their written work and their handwriting is mostly of a very high standard. Leaders have high expectations and check that their expectations are met. The impact of this work is seen most clearly in key stage 2. However, in key stage 1, more pupils should reach the higher standard in writing.
- I explored how well school leaders are allocating the pupil premium funding to ensure that it has the best possible impact on disadvantaged pupils. The leaders overseeing this priority are determined that disadvantaged pupils should meet their full potential.
- Leaders carefully review the effectiveness of the funding and introduce new approaches when required. They share the workload effectively, generate new ideas together and challenge one another. As one of them said to me, 'Challenge

is the most important thing'. Work in books shows that disadvantaged pupils make good progress. Support plans are detailed and comprehensive and pay attention not just to academic success, but to emotional well-being, school attendance and participation in enrichment activities. School leaders take on a mentoring role with the most vulnerable pupils and support them individually as they progress through school. However, the written planning and reporting shared with governors is not as detailed as it could be. For example, it does not include information on the proportions of disadvantaged pupils who reach the higher standards.

Next steps for the school

Leaders and those responsible for governance should ensure that:

- school improvement plans describe clearly what success will look like and that systems used by governors to check on progress in the priority areas, including for disadvantaged pupils, are more rigorous and effective.
- a greater proportion of pupils achieve the higher standard in reading, writing and mathematics by the end of key stage 1
- they build on their recent successful launch of a 'creative curriculum' to secure consistently high standards in subjects other than 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 Leicestershire. This letter will be published on the Ofsted website.

Yours sincerely

Peter Strauss
Ofsted Inspector

Information about the inspection

During the inspection I met with you and other members of the school leadership team. I examined the school's single central record of staff and volunteers and explored how the school recruits suitable staff. I spoke with parents at the start of the school day and met with pupils from Years 4, 5 and 6. I visited lessons and scrutinised pupils' work with you and other senior leaders. I observed the pupils at lunchtime and had informal discussions with some school staff. I reviewed the 51 responses to Ofsted's Parent View survey, the 48 free-text comments by parents and the 23 responses to Ofsted's staff survey. I met with the chair of governors and spoke over the telephone with a senior school effectiveness partner from Leicestershire County Council. I examined minutes of governors' meetings and various school policies. I analysed pupil performance data and reviewed the school's website.