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Mrs Siobhan Marrow
Headteacher
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Dear Mrs Marrow

Short inspection of Newdigate Primary and Nursery School

Following my visit to the school on 5 March 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 January 2015.

This school continues to be good.

The leadership team has maintained the good quality of education in the school since the last inspection.

You, the deputy headteacher and the assistant headteacher form a strong team and provide effective leadership and direction for the school. Over recent years, there have been substantial changes to staffing and the number of pupils on roll has almost doubled. The school is now a two-form entry school with nursery provision for two-year-olds. You have managed the school's growth and transition well. Staff are hard-working and reflective. They are keen to learn and continually improve their practice.

The majority of parents and carers speak very highly of the school. They particularly appreciate the approachability of staff and the good communication systems. The new 'app' is very popular with parents. As one parent summarised, 'The ethos in the school is all about the children. The app is a brilliant way for us to share the children's learning.'

Along with governors, leaders have worked hard to tackle the recommendations made at the previous inspection. There have been marked improvements to the range of reading books available to pupils. Pupils enjoy the reading incentives, such as the reading raffle tickets awarded to pupils who read regularly. They enjoy and discuss high-quality, thought-provoking texts such as 'The Lost Words' and 'Children of the World'. This promotes positive attitudes to reading and encourages a depth

of understanding. At the end of key stage 2, the proportion of pupils achieving the higher standards in reading continues to improve and is now in line with the national average.

During the last inspection, it was noted that pupils did not have enough opportunities to apply their mathematical skills to investigations. Your investment in new mathematics resources and the increased training opportunities provided for staff have successfully addressed this. Staff work hard to make sure that pupils have opportunities to master their mathematical skills and reach a greater depth in their knowledge and understanding. In 2018, the proportion of pupils achieving higher standards in mathematics by the end of Year 6 was above the national average.

Your school improvement plan and subject action plans identify those things that need further improving. However, there are times when your targets and timescales are unclear and imprecise. This makes it difficult for you and governors to accurately assess the impact that different improvement actions are having on pupils' achievement.

Safeguarding is effective.

The leadership team has ensured that all safeguarding arrangements are fit for purpose. You have an effective team of people who work together to support staff and ensure that policy and procedures are clearly understood and closely followed.

You have appointed a family learning mentor who provides additional expertise and early help for families and pupils where needed. All staff know how to recognise and raise concerns about child protection. Communication systems between the staff and the family learning mentor are effective and efficient. Record-keeping is detailed and of high quality. You work well with external partners, including local schools, to ensure that pupils are protected and get the extra help that they need.

Pupils have a good understanding of how to recognise risk. This is because staff teach safety well through well-planned lessons, themed assemblies and special events such as Safer Internet Day.

Inspection findings

- We focused on the teaching of writing in early years and key stage 1. You have rightly identified that more pupils should be reaching expected and higher standards in writing by the end of Year 2. This is a key priority on your school improvement plan.
- In early years, writing is modelled and taught well. Good links are made between reading and writing in phonics lessons. It is very clear that activities to support children's control and coordination are part of daily routines and closely tailored to the children's differing stages of development. This prepares children well for early writing. Correct letter formation is taught frequently and well. Children practise in a variety of ways, for example using dough, sand and writing tools.

Close attention is paid to how children hold their pencil. Tripod grips are used where needed to aid pencil grip.

- Our checks made of children's learning journals in the Reception Year show that children make strong progress in forming letters correctly and recognising the sounds that letters make. Opportunities for children to write are planned carefully and creatively using children's favourite stories and nursery rhymes.
- This good start in writing is not always built on when children move into key stage 1. From our checks in pupils' books in key stage 1, it was clear that teachers do not all have the same high expectations. Poor presentation and basic errors in letter formation and sentence construction are sometimes left unaddressed over long periods of time. This hinders pupils' progress in writing.
- In September 2018, you appointed a teacher to lead improvements in writing across the school. She attends an external leadership programme with a research-based focus on improving writing in key stage 1. Her action plan identifies appropriate key priorities. There are early signs of improvement. For example, more opportunities are provided for pupils to write at length and for different purposes.
- You and your staff continue to work hard to improve pupils' attendance. For some time, overall attendance has been lower than in most other primary schools. Effective strategies are in place to improve attendance. These include the visits to families to build positive relationships and make clear the impact that absence has on children's achievement. As a result, the attendance of disadvantaged pupils has improved when compared to the same period last year. Close work with particular families has meant that punctuality has improved. You and the staff keep a close eye on the patterns of absence that might indicate safeguarding or welfare concerns.
- The progress of disadvantaged pupils is checked diligently on an individual pupil basis and additional help is provided where needed. A considerable range of interventions and support programmes is in place. However, leaders have not evaluated the impact of these different initiatives precisely enough. Therefore, leaders cannot easily decide what is working well and what needs to be changed. Consequently, yearly plans are not adapted accordingly.

Next steps for the school

Leaders and those responsible for governance should ensure that:

- improvement plans include clear and precise targets and timescales so that leaders and governors can assess accurately the impact that different actions are having within given timescales
- teachers' expectations of pupils' writing skills and presentation are consistently high across all classes
- the use of pupil premium funding is evaluated rigorously so that leaders can easily decide what is working well and what needs to be changed.

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

Yours sincerely

Marilyn Mottram
Ofsted Inspector

Information about the inspection

During the inspection, I met with you, the deputy headteacher and the assistant headteacher. I also met with the chair and the vice-chair of the governing body and two other governors. I visited all early years and key stage 1 classes with you, where we observed teaching and learning and looked at pupils' work. I met with the early years leader and looked at work in children's learning journals. I spoke informally with pupils during the day and visited key stage 2 classrooms.

I spoke with parents at the start of the school day and took account of 142 responses to Ofsted's online parent questionnaire, including free-text responses. I looked at a range of documentation, including the school's self-evaluation, improvement plans and information about safeguarding.