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Piccadilly Gate
Store Street
Manchester
M1 2WD

T 0300 123 4234
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Mrs Alison Read
Headteacher
Aldborough Primary School
Alby Hill
Aldborough
Norwich
Norfolk
NR11 7PH

Dear Mrs Read

Short inspection of Aldborough Primary School

Following my visit to the school on 20 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 June 2015.

This school continues to be good.

The leadership team has maintained the good quality of education in the school since the previous inspection. You and the governing body have an accurate view of the school and clear plans for how you will improve some aspects of the curriculum. You and the governors reviewed the school's leadership structure and appointed new leaders of English, mathematics and science, to focus on identified school improvement priorities. This means leaders have a strong emphasis on improving the quality of teaching across the curriculum.

Leaders and staff have created a vibrant and welcoming school. Adults know every pupil very well and concentrate on ensuring that their individual academic, social and emotional needs are met. Consequently, pupils make good progress. There is a strong nurturing and caring culture within the school. A parent commented that, 'This is a school where my child can thrive and do well.' The school offers a breakfast club that provides a number of pupils with a very positive start to the day, which they say they enjoy.

The school has the good fortune to be situated in a wonderful woodland setting, and you are determined to make the most of the opportunities this opens up for your pupils. Outdoor learning is encouraged. I saw learning outside where, in a drama session, pupils turned themselves into a variety of tree shapes and pupils involved in a mathematical investigation estimating measurements with liquids. Pupils make good use of the plentiful playground equipment at break and lunchtimes and engage in cooperative and imaginative play, returning to lessons ready to learn.

Classrooms have a purposeful atmosphere and pupils are inquisitive learners. Relationships between pupils and teachers are strong. Pupils feel well supported and say they can always ask teachers for help if they need it. Pupils behave very well both around school and in the classroom. Pupils understand adults' expectations of behaviour. Consequently, pupils manage their own behaviour well. Pupils are happy to come to school and attend regularly. One pupil told me that, 'If you fall over, your friends will always come and pick you up.'

The school is very much a part of the local community and organises 'family learning days' to help parents and their children learn together. The most recent was a trip to London. You are passionate about providing a rich curriculum and pupils speak enthusiastically about the wide range of different subjects and clubs they can experience, including sport, music, languages, art and drama. They also told me about the 'science, art and writing week', which gave them the opportunity to learn about the sea, through science-based exploration recorded in art and writing. You are equally determined to broaden pupils' horizons regarding future career possibilities. For example, during a recent 'doctors' day', medical students from the local university talked about their work and organised some mock activities that opened pupils' eyes to future opportunities. Bright displays around the school record and celebrate pupils' learning, including about different cultures and religions.

Governors know the school very well. They visit regularly and offer you support, guidance and appropriate challenge. Like you, they are ambitious for the school and speak of the open and honest relationship you share. All staff who responded to the staff questionnaire are proud to work at the school and say that they are well led. They are very appreciative of the professional development opportunities provided by the trust, including for those who are new to leadership, which support them to improve their practice.

Safeguarding is effective.

Adults place a high priority on the importance of safeguarding. Leaders have ensured that the school's safeguarding arrangements are fit for purpose. All necessary checks to ensure that adults are safe to work with pupils are carried out. A safeguarding governor comes to the school regularly to check that all records regarding safeguarding concerns are carefully maintained. You make effective use of external agencies to support pupils and their families when necessary. Staff receive regular training about their safeguarding responsibilities and understand the importance of timely referral if concerns arise. Most importantly, pupils feel safe in school. Through the curriculum, pupils understand how to keep themselves safe, including when using the internet. They say there is no bullying and that they are kind to one another. They are clear that it is 'ok to be different'.

Inspection findings

- I considered the actions that leaders are taking to support pupils with special educational needs and/or disabilities (SEND) so that these pupils make good progress. This is because there is a high proportion of pupils with SEND in some classes.

- You have identified this as a priority and now lead as the special educational needs coordinator, well supported by your deputy headteacher. Leaders are resolute that these pupils are offered a fully inclusive curriculum. Barriers to learning are addressed within the classroom, wherever possible, through high-quality teaching. Other adults work well alongside teachers to support pupils to develop resilience and independence in their learning. You and your leaders carefully monitor the progress pupils are making. Teaching assistants provide effective additional one-to-one support, sharply focused on addressing identified gaps in knowledge and understanding. Internal school data and evidence from pupils' work indicate that current pupils with SEND are making good progress.
- Next, I looked at the actions leaders are taking to improve progress in reading, writing and mathematics for current pupils. This was because the strong progress seen for reading and writing in 2017 was not repeated last year. In response to this, leaders have identified the need to re-energise the teaching of reading and writing.
- Parents are encouraged to come into the school before lessons to sit and read with their children. Small group reading, led by a team of trained volunteers, takes place once a week. New, more challenging and up-to-date texts have been purchased for the library. The impact of these actions is evident in the love of reading pupils talk about and their ability to hold well-developed discussions about characterisations, genre and what might happen next in stories. Pupils read age-appropriate texts fluently and with understanding. Less confident readers are supported well, and their reading is improving.
- In writing, leaders established that improving pupils' ability to write at length, with better technical accuracy, was critical in raising achievement. Work scrutiny showed that pupils practise their skills often, using editing skills to improve their final piece of work. Teachers were seen supporting pupils in Year 2 to make precise use of adverbs. In Year 3, some most-able pupils were using subordinate clauses in their writing. Consequently, almost all pupils are making at least good progress in both reading and writing.
- Since 2016, in mathematics, progress has been good, but leaders are determined to improve standards further. A 'maths mastery' approach, which develops pupils' ability to use their mathematical knowledge fluently, is now used across all age groups. Teachers say they have benefited from additional training.
- Pupils are clear that they 'go over' topics until they are secure in their understanding and use their knowledge confidently. For example, almost all pupils in a key stage 2 lesson could confidently explain how to divide and multiply using decimals, by referring to crucial underpinning mathematical knowledge. However, most-able pupils said they would like more opportunities in lessons to attempt challenging problems that made them think even harder about mathematics.
- Finally, I checked how leaders ensure that learning is planned appropriately across the whole curriculum to meet pupils' needs and account for their prior knowledge and understanding. This is because in some classes there are pupils from different year groups.
- You make effective adjustments where classes have a mixed age range. For example, in the small, age-appropriate groups of pupils learning phonics, well-planned teaching ensures that pupils make good progress. In key stage 2, careful consideration is given

to starting points when planning learning in English and mathematics. This results in most pupils learning well.

- In subjects other than English and mathematics there is early evidence that teachers have considered the sequencing of topics to build strong subject-specific knowledge. For example, in science some most-able pupils showed growing confidence in their understanding. However, this was not reflected in other subjects, where activities limit pupils' opportunity to respond in depth. Furthermore, pupils do not routinely practise the expertise they have developed in writing across the wider curriculum.

Next steps for the school

Leaders and those responsible for governance should ensure that:

- chosen strategies to improve challenge for the most able pupils in mathematics are fully developed, so that more pupils make stronger progress
- there is appropriate challenge, particularly for the most able pupils, in subjects other than English and mathematics
- teachers expect pupils to apply their writing skills in other subjects to the same standard as they do in English.

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

Kay Leach
Ofsted Inspector

Information about the inspection

During the inspection, I met with you, other senior and middle leaders, governors, trust members and a group of pupils. I also spoke over the telephone to a representative of the local authority. Together, we visited a wide range of classes to observe teaching, to look at pupils' books and see them at work. I met with parents at the start of the day. I took account of 24 responses to Ofsted's online questionnaire, Parent View, including 37 free-text comments. I considered 12 staff responses to their Ofsted questionnaire. I evaluated a range of school documentation, including the school's view of its own performance, school improvement plans, assessment information and documents and policies relating to safeguarding.