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Mrs Terri Daters
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Dear Mrs Daters

Short inspection of Shipbourne School

Following my visit to the school on 28 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 March 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 thoroughly understand your school and its needs. You have taken decisive action regarding the things that need improvement in the school. You are committed to pupils receiving quality teaching and learning and have been determined to drive school improvement. Therefore, pupils are achieving better in mathematics and English. Staff, governors and the local authority have invested time in supporting you to bring about improvement in pupil learning. Leaders have planned carefully for the future of this very small school. You have been working successfully with another local school with a view to federation. This collaboration is contributing to your climate of improvement.

This is a happy school. Parents and carers are highly supportive of you and the school. They particularly appreciate the friendly manner of the staff. They say their concerns are listened to, taken seriously and responded to quickly. Pupils enjoy the opportunities they have to work and play together. One pupil said, 'Everyone plays together nicely.' Pupils enjoy their lessons and behaviour in class is excellent. They concentrate well and apply themselves to their learning activities. Pupils also appreciate the wide range of clubs on offer and almost every pupil attends at least one of them. They relish their responsibilities as school councillors and playground buddies. Year 6 pupils buddy Reception pupils and enjoy helping them in class from time to time and playing with them on the playground.

At the previous inspection, you were asked to make sure that pupils know how to act

on the advice teachers give them to improve their writing. You have introduced a new approach which helps pupils do this. Effective use of verbal feedback to individuals and targeted advice to groups of pupils about their next steps in learning have led to improvement in spelling, punctuation and grammar throughout the school. Pupils in upper key stage 2 have begun to edit their work for themselves. This has given them a deeper knowledge of the things they need to be able to do well to make them better writers.

In upper key stage 2, pupils write with increasing accuracy. Many pupils spell confidently in unaided writing. However, too few pupils achieve greater depth through becoming more expressive and creative in their story writing. Pupils do not have a rich enough vocabulary and do not use sufficient strategies in their writing to engage and excite their readers.

Changes to the teaching of mathematics have been successful in stimulating enjoyment and interest in learning. Pupils say that mathematics is fun and they find the work stretching. However, not all pupils throughout the school have enough opportunity to think more deeply about their mathematics and challenge themselves through activities such as reasoning.

Safeguarding is effective.

Leaders have made sure the school's systems for safeguarding are thorough. The school administrator conscientiously keeps documentation. Alongside governors, you monitor safeguarding and records are well kept. Training in all aspects of safeguarding is up to date. You make good use of an online package for staff to ensure that they have regular refresher training. Adults know how to report concerns and you make referrals to other agencies such as social services when needed. Pupils feel safe in school. They are confident that there will always be a member of staff to talk to if they have any concerns. Parents, pupils and staff agree that incidents of poor behaviour and bullying are rare. Pupils say that teachers are good at swiftly resolving any issues.

Regular teaching about internet safety makes sure that pupils know how to keep themselves safe online. Posters around the school remind them what to do. Parents are informed about online safety through letters from the school and there is clear signposting to help for parents about this issue on the school website.

You monitor attendance closely, addressing the small amount of persistent absence. This, alongside the good relationships you have with parents, has resulted in attendance that is above the national average.

Inspection findings

- Teachers plan challenge in learning to cater for the range of ages in each class. The most able pupils are able to access the challenges set for the oldest pupils in the class. Many younger pupils enjoy stretching themselves to the older pupils' work and are therefore making good progress. However, challenges for the oldest

most able pupils in the class do not always stretch them sufficiently.

- The large majority of pupils make strong progress in reading, writing and mathematics. There are no pupils on the special educational needs register. The very small numbers of disadvantaged and vulnerable pupils make progress in line with all other pupils. This is because staff know the learning needs of each pupil well. They plan with specific individual learning plans for any pupil in danger of falling behind. Pupils receive carefully monitored additional help and appropriate support. This means that the majority catch up with their peers.
- The English subject leaders have introduced a new approach to story writing. Its visual content is particularly effective for boys throughout the school and pupils in key stage 1. Pupils are keen to write and apply themselves well in lessons. Creative starters for pupils' writing are provided often through events and visitors to school. For example, the excitement of a dragon in the playground captured the imagination of the whole school.
- A few parents are concerned about pupils receiving appropriate curriculum content in mixed-age classes. Leaders are very aware of the need to teach all pupils the knowledge and skills appropriate for their age. Staff monitor age-appropriate learning objectives for each pupil in a wide range of subjects to check that they are learning at the right level for their age. Hence, coverage of the national curriculum is good.
- Pupils enjoy the enrichment days. The visits and visitors bring the wider curriculum to life. Pupils have opportunities to take part in arts and physical education. Teachers make sure that they teach key subject knowledge in wider curriculum subjects such as history and geography. Science teaching is a strength. Pupils can make predictions and enjoy testing out their theories with practical experiments.
- The mathematics subject leader has been effective in introducing a new approach to mathematics throughout the school. Well-structured planning for mixed-age classes and evidence in books show that pupils are learning the correct content for their age. Of particular note has been the introduction of the use of practical mathematical resources for pupils of all ages. This has had a positive effect on pupils' learning. Pupils enjoy and appreciate the way that physical manipulation of resources helps them in their mathematical thinking. However, teachers do not use resources enough to provide opportunities for greater challenge for the most able.

Next steps for the school

Leaders and those responsible for governance should ensure that:

- pupils' creative writing engages their readers
- there is challenge for the most able pupils, particularly in 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 Kent. This letter will be published on the Ofsted website.

Yours sincerely

Lesley Corbett
Ofsted Inspector

Information about the inspection

I met with you, your mentor from a local school, two governors, a representative of the local authority, and a group of pupils. I visited all the classes in the school with you to observe teaching and learning. I considered nine responses to Ofsted's staff questionnaire, and took account of 20 responses to Ofsted's online survey, Parent View, including five free-text comments. I analysed a range of the school's documents including leaders' self-evaluation and improvement planning; minutes of the governing body's meetings; and safeguarding checks, policies and procedures.