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Mrs Helen Smith
Headteacher
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Dear Mrs Smith

Short inspection of Larklands Infant School

Following my visit to the school on 26 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 December 2014.

This school continues to be good.

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

You have worked with governors to address key areas for improvement and continued to improve the quality of education for pupils. With your team, you have accurately evaluated the school's strengths and areas for improvement and have developed appropriate plans designed to move the school forward.

Staff make careful use of all available space in the school and have developed a welcoming and vibrant environment for learning. The school's vision for a caring school community in which 'the learning and well-being of our children are central to all decision-making' is evident in the strength of relationships between teachers and pupils and the high quality of pastoral care. Parents and carers praise the school and the quality of your leadership. During your time as the school's headteacher, you have developed strong relationships with the community. You show determination in your belief that every pupil can flourish.

The school has achieved a good level of success in improving pupils' outcomes in the phonics screening check. A number of initiatives have been implemented which have helped to improve consistency in the quality of the teaching of phonics. As a result, the proportion of pupils who achieve the expected standard in the phonics screening check now exceeds the national average. The introduction of a dedicated phonics slot in the morning has created a good learning routine for letters and sounds. Digital learning resources are well chosen and used alongside more

traditional resources. A well-received phonics workshop designed to increase parents' understanding of the use of phonics to support early reading has helped to promote pupils' skills in blending. The decision to place a dedicated literacy coordinator in the early years has raised teachers' skills and improved children's progress in phonics. Close analysis of pupils' confidence in the use of verbal cues ensures that interventions can be appropriately planned and delivered.

Since the previous inspection, leaders have developed appropriate plans to improve the progress and attainment of boys. Close analysis of the progress of all groups of pupils is undertaken by leaders at regular intervals. Pupils who are working at the cusp of the expected standard or greater depth are identified and opportunities planned to enable them to move on at pace in their learning. Historically, the proportion of boys who achieved a good level of development in the early years was much lower than that of girls. However, more recently, by the end of Year 1, boys' attainment in the phonics screening check has significantly improved. By the end of key stage 1, the differences between the performance of boys and girls have reduced. In both reading and mathematics, boys are now attaining at a standard which is above the national average.

Safeguarding is effective.

You have developed a highly effective culture of safeguarding pupils at the school. The child protection policy is comprehensive and includes reference to procedures for referring any concerns. Staff receive regular training and are clear about their responsibilities for keeping pupils safe. Training includes information about the indicators of abuse, as well as the importance of maintaining vigilance for signs of radicalisation. The school works closely with a number of external agencies to protect pupils and ensure that early help is sought. Staff maintain meticulous records and are tenacious in seeking updates on the progress of agreed actions. The chair of governors ensures that the full governing body is well trained on all aspects of safeguarding and holds you to account for the quality of record keeping and the monitoring of pupils' safety. The school also accesses support from a range of therapeutic professionals and services to ensure that the personal needs of all children can be met. The single central record is comprehensive, compliant and securely maintained and safer recruitment practice is robust.

Both pupils and parents consider that the school provides a safe and welcoming environment and that incidents of bullying are rare. The behaviour policy outlines high expectations for positive behaviour in lessons and around the school site. Pupils have a good level of understanding of the 'beanstalk' behaviour management system and are keen to remain in the 'cloud' in order to access the 'golden time' rewards. Where behaviour of pupils is more challenging, staff use an age-appropriate reflective tool to promote positive change. Pupils understand how to keep themselves safe in a digital environment.

Inspection findings

- After a period of some instability, the early years is now benefiting from deployment of senior staff. Planning for teaching is detailed and fully comprehensive, covering all of the early learning areas. The environment is well resourced and additional adults use a range of activities to promote children's engagement and develop skills. A focus on the development of fine motor skills is helping to improve children's early writing. The pastoral needs of children are well met through the use of dedicated nurture space.
- Historically, pupils who are eligible for the pupil premium have not attained as well as their peers nationally. In 2018, a smaller proportion of disadvantaged children achieved a good level of development in the early years when compared with others nationally. However, by the end of key stage 1 in writing and mathematics, the difference had been eliminated and disadvantaged pupils achieved in line with others nationally. They did not do quite as well in reading. The improvement in pupils' progress is the result of leaders' careful use of additional funding. Staff understand the specific barriers to learning experienced by pupils and plan accordingly.
- Pupils with special educational needs and/or disabilities (SEND) benefit from the use of specialist support staff. Learning sequences are well planned and designed to meet pupils' emotional, behavioural and academic needs. Provision maps are detailed and progress information is shared with parents. Analysis of progress information leads to well-planned and timely interventions. The special educational needs coordinator delivers a range of training for staff and attends useful network meetings with colleagues from the local cluster of schools. Scrutiny of pupils' books suggests that pupils with SEND are making strong progress towards their learning goals.
- Leaders demonstrate significant commitment to improving the attendance of pupils. Careful tracking of absence rates is helping to reduce rates of persistent absence. Absence levels among disadvantaged pupils are addressed through engagement of appropriate external agencies and close communication with families. Pupils are rewarded for strong attendance and class data is publicised in monthly newsletters. Current attendance levels are broadly in line with the national average, although differences in the attendance of different groups of pupils persist.

Next steps for the school

Leaders and those responsible for governance should ensure that:

- disadvantaged pupils continue to make good progress in all subjects, and their attainment in reading improves
- the school continues to work to improve attendance levels for all groups of pupils.

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

Yours sincerely

Emma Hollis-Brown
Ofsted Inspector

Information about the inspection

At the start of the inspection, I met with you and shared the lines of enquiry. I met with the subject leaders for English and mathematics, representatives of the governing body and the SENCo. I considered the 31 responses of parents to Ofsted's online survey, Parent View, along with some free-text comments, and met with parents at the start of the school day. I also considered the responses of pupils and staff to Ofsted's surveys. Together with you, I visited classes in both the early years and key stage 1 and considered pupils' work in books. I considered a range of documents, including leaders' evaluation of their school's current performance, their plans for improvement and information on pupils' current progress. I considered a number of policy documents and records, including those related to safeguarding. We also considered recruitment checks in order to confirm the robustness of practice in this area.