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Mrs Fiona Wheatley
Headteacher
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Dear Mrs Wheatley

Short inspection of Sawtry Infants' School

Following my visit to the school on 4 July 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 second short inspection carried out since the school was judged to be good in February 2011.

This school continues to be good.

The leadership team has maintained the good quality of education in the school since the last inspection. You, your deputy headteacher and governors know the school well. Everyone has high expectations and reflects on what works well and what could be better. As a result, senior leaders and governors continue to build successfully on the strengths of the school and address areas for development as they arise.

You have created a friendly, welcoming and happy school. Pupils behave very well in their lessons and clearly enjoy coming to school. Sawtry Infants' School provides pupils with a good start to their education. Parent View, Ofsted's online questionnaire, shows that parents fully support the work of the school. Typical comments included: 'The school is caring, kind, well run and treats its pupils as individuals,' and 'My child is thriving with his learning and loves going to school.' Parents also praised the way staff support vulnerable pupils and meet their individual needs.

Pupils and staff are proud to be part of the school. They indicate behaviour is good and that everyone shows respect and tolerance towards each other. Inspection evidence supports these views.

Governors are well organised and take their roles seriously. They see the effect of leaders' actions through regular visits to the school. They are informed about all aspects of the school's work. This enables them to hold leaders to account for the

quality of teaching and learning and pupils' outcomes.

Reception children are happy, confident learners. They show good behaviour and concentration when taking part in stimulating activities, both inside and outside. All groups of children are well prepared for learning in key stage 1.

You and your staff provide an exciting curriculum. The sports coach provides exciting physical education opportunities during lessons and breaktimes. He also develops the pupils' social skills and self-esteem. During the inspection, the choir performed at a local school music festival. Other pupils showed good-quality skills as they enjoyed their dance, parachute and relay activities. Everyone worked well together, with pupils listening carefully to instructions and taking turns.

At the previous inspection, leaders were asked to use the school's assessment system more robustly to identify pupils' underachievement more swiftly. You and your deputy headteacher check pupils' performance information carefully and regularly, especially that for various groups of pupils. This identifies any underachievement early, so that you can provide effective interventions and support to reduce gaps in their learning. This is enabling most pupils to make good progress in English and mathematics this school year.

You and your deputy headteacher have continued to drive forward school improvement to address issues from the previous inspection. However, you acknowledge that the members of your new leadership team are still improving their relevant skills. For example, new subject leaders are eager to develop their roles and have made a good start, but their leadership has not yet had time to show enough improvements to pupils' progress across a range of subjects.

Safeguarding is effective.

Leaders have ensured that all safeguarding arrangements are fit for purpose. You and your deputy, as designated senior leaders for safeguarding, take effective steps to keep your own understanding and that of all staff up to date. Checks on all employees' suitability to work with children have been completed according to legal requirements. Staff are aware of their responsibility to safeguard pupils and know what to do if they have a concern. Safeguarding records are well organised and incidents are followed up appropriately.

Pupils' well-being is of paramount importance to staff. Pupils I spoke with told me they feel safe at school and trust staff to look after them. Pupils are taught how to be safe. They explained how they hold hands and act sensibly when walking to the local fire station to learn about fire safety.

Inspection findings

- My first line of enquiry to establish whether the school remains good was to determine how leaders ensure that pupils in all groups make good progress across key stage 1 in writing and mathematics. I chose to look at this because

published performance information for 2018 attainment at the end of Year 2 indicates that pupils with special educational needs and/or disabilities (SEND) did less well than other groups and there were some gaps between boys' and girls' achievement. Additionally, the previous inspection report raised concerns about the lack of challenge for the most able pupils in writing and mathematics.

- Evidence in pupils' books and the school's assessment systems indicate that most pupils, across all groups in Years 1 and 2, are making good progress in writing and mathematics from their September starting points. Senior leaders make regular and robust checks on the attainment and progress of all groups of pupils. They establish challenging targets for the end of Year 2 based on pupils' standards at the end of Reception. Effective teaching and learning, combined with appropriate additional support provided by the special educational needs coordinator (SENCo), where required, enable most pupils to reach their individual targets and make good progress. This includes boys, girls, pupils with SEND and the most able. As a result, outcomes for writing and mathematics in 2019 are improving across key stage 1, especially at greater depth in mathematics.
- Leaders, including the new English leader, are supporting staff to improve the teaching and learning of writing. The new strategies, which have been in place since September, provide pupils with clear guidance on how to write well in different genres. Staff give pupils more opportunities to write at length, using a wider range of vocabulary and punctuation. This is challenging the most able pupils effectively.
- When teaching mathematics, adults use the correct mathematical vocabulary with clear explanations to support pupils' learning. A greater proportion of pupils are being challenged to develop their reasoning skills, so that they are working at greater depth.
- My second line of enquiry explored how leaders are improving the teaching and learning of early reading and phonics. This is because the school's results in the 2018 Year 1 phonics screening check was below the national average. The early years and Year 1 leaders work closely together to ensure consistency in the teaching of reading and phonics across the two key stages.
- Since September, new teaching strategies, longer daily phonics sessions and more regular, robust, assessment of pupils' knowledge of sounds are quickly improving pupils' phonological skills. We saw pupils in the Reception and Year 1 classes segmenting and blending sounds with the correct pronunciation to read and spell words. They also used these skills when reading appropriate books, which matched their phonics abilities. Pupils, especially boys, enjoyed the outside active tasks, which consolidated their previous learning. Initial assessments in the 2019 Year 1 phonics screening check show a significant improvement this year. Additionally, effective comprehension questions are developing pupils' understanding of their reading, and challenging the most able.
- The final line of enquiry I investigated was to check if leaders carry out their roles and responsibilities effectively. This was an area to develop at the previous inspection. The early years leader, SENCo, year group leaders and subject leaders I met are enthusiastic and knowledgeable about their roles. They check teaching and learning and ensure that teachers are covering the appropriate

national curriculum objectives for their area of responsibility. Currently, foundation subject leaders are focusing on technical vocabulary and effective cross-curricular links to further support improvement in teaching and learning.

- The deputy headteacher's recent review of the work of subject leaders highlighted that assessment systems are not yet fully embedded in subjects other than English and mathematics. This matches evidence seen in pupils' topic books. Work is not of the same high standard as seen in English and mathematics books, which has a negative impact on the progress pupils make. There are too few opportunities for pupils to work at greater depth in other subjects of the curriculum.

Next steps for the school

Leaders and those responsible for governance should ensure that:

- teachers give pupils more opportunities to deepen their thinking so that they can attain greater depth in all subjects of the curriculum
- leaders develop assessments for subjects other than English and mathematics so that pupils' progress can be accurately monitored
- leaders of subjects other than English and mathematics improve their skills further so that they contribute effectively to raising standards.

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

Yours sincerely

Julie Harrison
Ofsted Inspector

Information about the inspection

During the inspection, I met with you, governors, and senior and middle leaders. I spoke to a group of pupils. I looked at a range of documentation, including information about the school's self-evaluation and plans for future improvement. Additionally, I examined policies and procedures for safeguarding pupils, including the school's single central record of pre-employment checks on staff. I visited classrooms in the school with you and the deputy headteacher, to observe pupils' learning and scrutinise the work in pupils' books. I took account of the views of 32 parents, who responded to Ofsted's online questionnaire, Parent View, together with the written views of 17 parents from the free-text service. I also looked at the online questionnaire responses from 15 staff members.