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Judith Hopwood
Lydgate Junior and Infant School
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Dear Mrs Hopwood

Short inspection of Lydgate Junior and Infant School

Following my visit to the school on 6 October 2015 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 2011.

This school continues to be good.

The leadership team has maintained the good quality of education in the school since the last inspection. Over the last three years, outcomes in reading, writing and mathematics have steadily improved in the early years and at Key Stages 1 and 2. The actions and energy of senior leaders demonstrate a good capacity to bring about further improvement.

You have created an open and reflective culture in the school. Effective communication and teamwork are central to the school's success. Leaders and governors analyse strengths and weaknesses in performance honestly and accurately and are prompt in acting on emerging issues to bring about improvement. The highly committed senior leadership team has a clear grasp of school priorities. Subject leaders take effective action to ensure that the quality of teaching and learning remains consistently good over time.

Inspectors identified two areas for improvement at the last inspection. First, to increase achievement, especially in mathematics and by the more-able pupils. Second, to improve the monitoring and evaluation of pupils' progress. Current pupils across the school are making good progress. In Key Stage 2, good progress in reading, writing and mathematics is preparing pupils well for secondary education.

Leaders tackle any emerging issues of concern with quick and decisive action. For example, a strong focus on improving the achievement of the more-able pupils has ensured that this group is making at least good progress in the great majority of classes across the school, including in mathematics.

Senior leaders frequently make unannounced monitoring visits to analyse strengths and weaknesses in teaching, and in pupils' written work and progress over time. Leaders provide constructive suggestions for improvement to teachers. Teachers act on these and where they do not, firm action is taken. Teachers new to the profession are well supported.

Regular, close scrutiny and targeted actions ensure that pupils make sustained progress across the school. The analysis of whole-school information occasionally lacks a sharp enough focus on the progress made by different groups.

Governors ask challenging questions of senior leaders about the progress of pupils, including the more-able and the disadvantaged. Their regular focused visits to the school scrutinise the implementation of actions in the school improvement plan. They recognise the need for greater consistency in the trend of improvement over time in order for the school to be outstanding.

Safeguarding is effective.

The leadership team has ensured that all safeguarding arrangements are fit for purpose and records are detailed and of high quality. All staff receive regular and appropriate training so they know how to keep pupils safe. Referral to other agencies is well managed. Close links with external agencies ensure that pupils and their families receive the help and support they need to keep pupils safe and in education. Case studies demonstrate a close understanding of pupils' needs and the beneficial impact of the support provided. Good communication between school leaders, governors and staff ensures that important messages about safeguarding are shared and understood. A strong focus on pupils' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development also promotes effective safeguarding through the positive impact on pupils' conduct and their tolerant behaviour towards others.

Inspection findings

Leaders are sustaining good standards of teaching and have improved aspects that were weaker at the time of the last inspection. In visits to lessons at Key Stage 2, learning activities in mathematics allowed pupils to work at different levels of difficulty, appropriate to their current depth of understanding. Because pupils could choose the level of challenge to match their current knowledge and understanding, they were motivated to do their best and extend their skills. Effective use of visual aids by teachers, combined with clear explanations, promoted pupils' understanding well. Well-planned practical activities and resources helped pupils learn about three-dimensional shapes in one class; and in another, to apply a method for subtraction.

Leaders have taken effective action to improve pupils' skills in reading and writing across all key stages. In an enthusiastically led English lesson, Key Stage 2 pupils thoroughly enjoyed talking about their plans for writing a newspaper report. They used choral reading of a text with physical actions to show the punctuation. Effective questioning helped pupils to understand the meaning of unfamiliar words. Year 2

pupils are successfully learning to read and to distinguish between the past and present tense. In Reception, staff leading a number of small groups are successfully encouraging children to speak in whole sentences.

Well-trained teaching assistants make an effective contribution to teaching and learning because they are very clear about what the teacher wants them to do and why. The weekly programme of staff training is led by a range of staff, including teaching assistants, and is making a difference by improving and refreshing aspects of teachers' practice.

In 2015, leaders took effective action to help staff deal with incidents of highly challenging behaviour they had not come across before. New support programmes, led by a new behaviour leader, and a more consistently applied new behaviour policy have improved pupils' behaviour and the skills of staff in managing difficulties should they again arise. Behaviour is good and pupils are polite, friendly and keen to learn.

The leadership and support for special educational needs are sharply focused on pupils with the most complex difficulties. Leaders make effective use of expertise from other schools and agencies to train staff so that pupils' specific needs are well met. As a result, pupils are making good progress in their speech, language and social skills.

Leaders have reversed a decline in attendance, although it remains below average. Home visits to parents of Reception children had a positive impact. The appointment of a part-time school nurse is helping the school to tackle the number of absences due to minor illness. Penalty notices have reduced the requests for extended leave abroad.

The proportion of children in early years achieving a good level of development is steadily increasing. This is the result of effective action to improve children's early writing when this was identified by senior leaders as a relative weakness. In 2015, two thirds reached a good level of development, which compares favourably to the national picture.

At Key Stage 1, over the last three years, attainment has been rising in reading, mathematics and, particularly, in writing. A similar, positive picture is seen in Key Stage 2. However, the proportion of pupils reaching higher standards is not increasing as quickly in all classes. Leaders and governors know that this is a priority area for development. Similarly, while the achievement gap for disadvantaged pupils is narrowing, it is not doing so quickly in every class.

Next steps for the school

Leaders and governors should ensure that:

- teaching enables pupils to understand in more depth the concepts they study so that even more of them reach higher standards in reading, writing and mathematics
- they use their detailed whole-school analysis of progress to ensure that the gap for disadvantaged pupils continues to narrow and does so quickly in all classes.

Yours sincerely

Bernard Campbell
Her Majesty's Inspector

Information about the inspection

I discussed the work of the school with you, the deputy headteacher and literacy leader, the leader of early years and Key Stage 1, the mathematics leader, the special educational needs co-ordinator and a member of the governing body who is also a parent. I scrutinised a range of documentation about the monitoring and evaluation of school performance and teaching and learning. I also read the school improvement plan. I examined information about pupils' progress, attendance, exclusion and the safeguarding of pupils. I considered external evaluations of aspects of the school's work and the minutes of the governing body, and considered 29 responses to the staff questionnaire. There were too few responses to Ofsted's online questionnaire (Parent View) to consider. I visited most classes to observe teaching and learning, some alongside you. I considered samples of work in pupils' books and talked to pupils about their learning.