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21 April 2017

Mrs Harvey
Headteacher
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Dear Mrs Harvey

Short inspection of Reed First School

Following my visit to the school on 23 March 2017, 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 2013.

This school continues to be good.

The leadership team has maintained the good quality of education in the school since the previous inspection. Working alongside a supportive governing body, your leadership has created a school that is inclusive to all and plays an important role in the local community. You and your governors know the school well. You have a good understanding of its strengths and the areas for development. You have put in place a regular improvement cycle that works on improving areas where performance dips from your high expectations. One parent noted, 'this is a school that goes the extra mile' and that summarises your school well. You treat every pupil as an individual and have an equal concern for all of the families who are connected to your school.

Governance is now strong and governors have a clear understanding of their roles and how to hold the school to account effectively. There is an embedded culture of challenge and governors make regular visits to school completing effective reports for the main governing body.

Despite some difficult staffing issues in recent times, you have led the school well so that the continuity of learning for pupils has been maintained and the impact on pupils' outcomes has been minimal. In particular, the pupils of Year 3 have had a number of teachers over the last two years and you have helped ensure that they make steady progress. I am pleased to note that the rate of progress for this group has increased significantly this year.

Since the previous inspection, you have made good progress in dealing with the areas identified for improvement. Recent appointments, from September, have been positive. Pupils are now making good progress in the infant class. Work in books shows a good level of challenge and effective guidance is given to pupils on what to do next so that they can keep on improving. Current school assessments show that a higher proportion of pupils are working at the expected level this year than last, which signifies good progress from their low foundation stage starting points.

You have ensured that effective staff development has taken place with training that has helped teachers know what the age-related expectations in English for each year group are. You observe all classes, giving appropriate feedback so that teaching practice can be improved further. In addition, staff have been supported to visit other schools to observe good practice.

Standards in phonics have improved year on year, so that they are now much closer to the national average. This is a result of the consistent and systematic teaching of phonics in all classes. Expectations have been raised and staff training provided. The school took part in the local authority pilot, which impacted positively on teaching and learning.

Safeguarding is effective.

Governors and the leadership team ensure that safeguarding arrangements are fit for purpose and that detailed records are kept. These records are safely locked away and organised effectively. The school recently voluntarily asked for a safeguarding review to be held by the local authority, to ensure that its systems were fully compliant. There is a strong culture of safeguarding around the school, which is shared by teachers, support staff, office staff and governors. Everyone is very mindful of the welfare of pupils, and all teachers have been kept up to date with training related to safeguarding, child protection and issues to do with sexual exploitation, radicalisation and extremism. Where necessary, close and effective links are made with external agencies to monitor and support vulnerable pupils.

Inspection findings

- Together we looked at the progress that most-able pupils are making. Since the previous inspection, an additional part-time teacher has been appointed to support the learning of the most able children. This teacher runs a programme of activities that means some pupils are taken out of class to receive additional challenge. The deployment of teaching assistants has been changed so that they help most-able children as well as others in the class. Other intervention programmes have been put in place to support most-able pupils throughout the school. As a result of these actions, the proportion of most-able children in each year group who are on track to reach a greater level of depth by the end of Year 2 has improved in reading and writing but not in mathematics. The programmes put in place to support most-able writers have not yet had sufficient impact and not enough prominence has been given to this area in the school improvement plan.

- Together we looked at the quality of the curriculum provided across all subjects and investigated current progress in science. We found that a broad and balanced curriculum is fully in place. Pupils enjoy a wide range of curriculum activities across all national curriculum subjects. The curriculum is planned so that reading, writing, mathematics, physical education and music are taught as individual subjects. Science is often blocked as a day or a whole week of learning; science is also taught as part of the general topic work. Last year, no children reached the expected level in science at the end of Year 2 but observations and work scrutiny during the inspection agree with the school's own assessment that all pupils are on track to reach the expected level this year.
- The current work undertaken by Year 3/4 provides a good example of an effective curriculum with detailed work being undertaken as part of a study of the Romans. This work has included preparing for and taking part in a Roman breakfast and making shields. The school arranged for a museum to visit the school and aspects of the Roman invasion of Britain provided pupils with an opportunity to write purposefully. Scrutiny of pupils' work in this area shows that it is of a good standard.
- The curriculum is supported by a wide range of clubs such as Zumba, astronomy, dance, sketching, recorders and football. In addition, pupils take part in local competitions and festivals such as tag rugby, cricket and tennis. As the school has a relatively small pupil roll this means that almost every pupil has the opportunity to represent the school at one event or another. All Year 3 children are taught the tenor horn and they have the opportunity to continue this area of study in Year 4. Trips have been held to the seaside and Mountfitchet Castle. A residential visit (every other year) for Year 3/4 is greatly appreciated by the pupils and provides opportunities to develop self-confidence, learn independence and take part in adventurous activities.
- Examination of the school's website before the inspection showed that curriculum information provided for parents was not up to date.
- We also looked at the quality of teaching and learning of writing across the school. Improving the rate of progress in writing has been identified as part of the school development plan. Actions taken in the early years class to improve standards have included increasing opportunities to write as part of adult-directed and child-initiated activities and providing more opportunities for writing as part of role play. As a result of this, standards are improving and at least 75% of children in Reception Class are well on their way to achieving a good level of development by the end of the year. The headteacher regularly samples the work produced by pupils, providing formal feedback to staff on a termly basis.
- The governors' curriculum and standards committee has looked closely at the quality of writing and held the headteacher to account appropriately. Monitoring of judgements made by teachers in writing has taken place between staff in different classes and the school has worked with the local authority and other local schools to moderate judgements and ensure that teachers know the level that is expected to be reached. The school has put effective systems in place to track the progress pupils make in writing every term. Assessments are analysed and intervention programmes are organised for those falling behind. Planning by

teachers has been developed to ensure that children are given adequate time to write independently so that opportunities for sustained writing have been increased.

- Despite the good progress being made across the school not enough support is currently being provided to ensure that pupils in Year 3, who have had a number of teachers over the last year, maintain the accelerated progress that they have made recently.

Next steps for the school

Leaders and those responsible for governance should ensure that:

- more pupils are supported to reach the higher levels in writing
- they provide further support for Year 3 pupils so that they can maintain their current rate of accelerated progress following a period of high staff turnover during the last two years
- curriculum information is kept up to date on the website.

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

Yours sincerely

Duncan Ramsey
Ofsted Inspector

Information about the inspection

During the inspection, I met with you and a group of governors. You and I visited lessons in all classes. In each class, I spoke to pupils about their work, looked at their books and asked them their views about the school. At the beginning of the day, I spoke to several parents as they brought their children to school. I looked at the quality of work in pupils' exercise books. I considered documentary evidence relating to the impact of the school's work, including safeguarding. I took into account 25 responses to the Ofsted online survey. I considered the school's development plan, self-evaluation, the curriculum and the tracking of pupils' progress. I also scrutinised recent achievement in statutory assessments.