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2 November 2017

Sarah Loader
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Dear Mrs Loader

Short inspection of Lyngford Park Primary School

Following my visit to the school on 10 October 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 March 2013.

This school continues to be good.

The leadership team has maintained the good quality of education in the school since the previous inspection. You, your leadership team and the governors believe strongly that the social and emotional well-being of the children comes first. As a result of your investment in this aspect of pupils' development, they also want to learn. A new parent wrote, 'My son is happy and excited with his new school and I have already seen improvements in his learning and his enthusiasm for school.' You are extending pupils' knowledge of their lives beyond their own community through special learning activities and visits such as the trip to the steam railway.

A strength of the school's leadership is the way in which responsibilities are shared between senior and middle leaders. Together, since the previous inspection, you have continued to develop the quality and consistency of teaching across the school. This has resulted in improvements in pupils' progress. Through robust self-evaluation, you and the leadership team identify any areas of underperformance. You routinely reflect upon and evaluate the effectiveness of the school's approach to further improvement. You have identified the need for further work on improving attendance and continuing to diminish the difference in attainment between disadvantaged and other pupils.

Staff nurture and challenge pupils to help them to achieve their best. Senior leaders hold pupil progress meetings with the staff which result in providing extra help where it is needed. The impact of this work can be seen in the rise in the number of children in the early years reaching a good level of development, an improving

trend of results in the Year 1 phonics check and an improvement in pupils' attainment at the end of key stage 2.

The school is an inclusive community. Staff work hard, using their own expertise and that of other agencies, to ensure that all pupils can participate in classroom activities and extra-curricular opportunities. However, the leaders who oversee special educational needs have identified that staff need more training on meeting the needs of pupils who have autistic spectrum disorder.

Safeguarding is effective.

You and the governors ensure that all statutory requirements relating to safeguarding are met. You keep the governors and staff up to date with the latest requirements, as outlined in the Department for Education document 'Keeping Children Safe in Education'. The requirements are reflected in your policies and procedures. When recruiting staff, you make and record all checks on their suitability to work with children, in line with current guidance. Your records are comprehensive, and governors check them regularly.

All staff are trained in safeguarding and this includes training in the risks of extremism and radicalisation. Staff are vigilant in their work to keep pupils safe and secure in school and within the wider community. Where you have concerns about pupils, you make appropriate use of external agencies and follow up the outcomes robustly. Displays around the school reinforce key messages to help pupils understand how to keep safe. A parent who answered the online questionnaire, Parent View, commented that 'My daughter comes out telling us about the safeguarding that they have learnt.'

Inspection findings

- My first line of enquiry focused on teaching phonics for reading and writing. On reviewing your latest school data, visiting classrooms and talking to pupils, it was clear that the steps you have taken to improve progress and attainment in phonics, reading and writing are having a positive impact. More pupils are reaching the expected standard for their age in reading, writing and mathematics and more are reaching the higher standard at the end of key stage 2.
- Leaders have established clear and consistent systems for teaching phonics, which the pupils understand well. They are actively using and developing the strategies they have been taught, both within phonics sessions and in their reading and writing. In teaching reading, writing and phonics, teachers skilfully use questioning and other effective strategies to extend the pupils' understanding. The new approaches to phonics and reading have resulted in pupils who can sustain their concentration when they are working independently. Pupils have a good understanding about editing and improving their work and respond well to the feedback that the teachers give them. However, staff are not fully consistent in using the new methods and extending pupils' learning effectively.

- The rigorous monitoring of progress in phonics enables school leaders to ensure that additional help can be allocated promptly when required. When necessary, you organise one-to-one support. Through monitoring, you have identified the need to start phonics at an earlier stage of learning in order to ensure that children meet the expected standard for their age. Some of the younger pupils struggle with pencil control. Pupils generally do not have enough opportunities to write independently. This limits their ability to improve their handwriting and apply their spelling knowledge.
- The next line of enquiry was around absence of pupils receiving special educational needs support and those in receipt of free school meals. Deeper analysis shows that some pupils are missing school for unavoidable ongoing medical reasons. Nevertheless, continuing to improve attendance for some groups of pupils remains an important aspect of the school's work.
- School leaders monitor absence closely and use a good range of strategies individually tailored to the needs of pupils and their families to improve attendance. You use links with other agencies effectively to tackle attendance issues and support families to improve attendance and punctuality to reduce time lost through late arrival.
- School leaders work effectively together where pupils' special needs, particularly social, emotional and mental health issues, are having a negative impact on attendance. As part of the school's ethos, you have worked effectively to keep pupils who have behavioural difficulties in school so that they can continue to learn and make a successful transition to the next stage of their education.
- I also explored how school leaders are using the additional funding for disadvantaged pupils to diminish the differences in attainment between them and other pupils. You have developed effective systems to track the progress of different groups of pupils. You act promptly if you notice that progress is slowing down. You make effective use of regular meetings with teachers to draw their attention to particular pupils who may have gaps in their understanding or require additional support. This work has been effective in ensuring that the progress in reading, writing and mathematics of disadvantaged pupils in your school has improved over the last two years. Although this remains an important priority for the school, the difference between the achievement of disadvantaged pupils and that of others nationally is reducing.
- Where pupils are both disadvantaged and have special educational needs and/or disabilities, different school leaders work effectively together to provide appropriate support. Nevertheless, while barriers to learning have been broadly identified by school leaders, specific barriers for individuals and groups are not sufficiently clear to influence how additional funding might be used even more effectively.
- The final line of enquiry related to how well governors check the school's work and hold school leaders to account. On speaking to governors, school leaders and reviewing governors' monitoring information, it is apparent that governance has continued to improve since the previous inspection. The governors have an in-depth knowledge of the school through monitoring your focused school improvement plan and pupils' progress information. They visit the school

regularly to see for themselves the quality of teaching and learning. They challenge the leadership team appropriately by asking pertinent questions, such as how changes in the teaching of reading are improving pupils' progress. Governors support the school well and are helped to be effective in their role by the open and receptive culture of school staff.

Next steps for the school

Leaders and those responsible for governance should ensure that:

- pupils have opportunities to write independently more often, more widely and in a more sustained way to support their handwriting and spelling
- school leaders continue to refine the process for identifying and alleviating barriers to learning and attendance.

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

Yours sincerely

Janet Ross
Ofsted Inspector

Information about the inspection

During this inspection, I spoke with you, your leadership team, staff, pupils, parents and five members of the governing body. I made visits to lessons to observe pupils' learning and to scrutinise their work. I considered a range of documentary evidence, which included the school's summary of self-evaluation, the school's development plan, progress-tracking information, attendance records, monitoring records and safeguarding documentation. In addition, I took account of 12 responses to the Parent View online survey.