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Mrs Angela Griffiths
Headteacher
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Dear Mrs Griffiths

Short inspection of Denfield Park Primary School

Following my visit to the school on 9 January 2018, 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 February 2013.

This school continues to be good.

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

Denfield Park is a safe, happy learning environment. Its spirit is captured by the school's values, which teach pupils to have pride in their abilities and in the hard work they put in each day, as well as always to be truthful and respectful. The corridors and classrooms are full of bright and attractive displays showing pupils' work across the curriculum, including impressive art and design. You have compiled a detailed evaluation of the school's many strengths, and an action plan that is focused on improving the right things so that Denfield Park is even better. The governing body is both committed and well informed, and performs its strategic role effectively. Governors hold you and senior leaders to account for all aspects of the school's work and are unafraid to ask you challenging questions.

You and your staff work tirelessly to help the high number of pupils whose home circumstances may make them vulnerable. You have high expectations of all groups of pupils, giving a clear message to your staff that every pupil must succeed. Staff, in turn, are well motivated and work in shared ways to support each other. They, too, are clear that the needs of pupils must come first. Staff consistently model cooperation, calmness, good manners and positivity to pupils. As a result, pupils learn to work together, are polite to each other and to visitors, and respect the school environment. They keep the school tidy and wear their uniform proudly. Pupils enjoy coming to school each day, and attendance is consistently above the national average. You have responded well overall to the areas for improvement identified at the last

inspection. Subject leaders are now tracking the progress of pupils to ensure that all groups are making good progress. They visit classrooms regularly to see the quality of teaching across the school for themselves. They also scrutinise pupils' work from a variety of year groups. They ensure that governors receive reports on these and other aspects so that the governing body can hold you to account across different subjects. Subject leaders present staff meetings to support their colleagues across the school effectively in, for example, teaching pupils to use vocabulary that is more ambitious when they write. This is resulting in faster overall progress for pupils across the school.

Pupils are now making good progress in their writing in key stage 1. During my visit, we looked together at pupils' work from different subjects and year groups. This shows that teachers are giving the most able pupils work that challenges them, while ensuring that those pupils who need to catch up are supported well with, for instance, mathematics apparatus. Pupils are improving their spelling and presenting their work neatly with increasingly fluent handwriting.

Around half of children leave the Nursery each summer to join other schools and around half of those who enter Reception are, in turn, new to Denfield Park. Children in the early years continue to make good overall progress from their starting points in almost all areas of learning. However, you have recognised that a smaller proportion of children leave the early years with a good level of development, largely because they have not consistently made rapid progress in their writing. The new leader of the early years, assisted by the English subject leader, has quickly ensured a much greater focus on this area of learning. During my visit, I saw for myself the many more opportunities that staff have planned across the early years to promote writing. As a result, children's progress in this area is improving quickly. However, you recognise that the impact of these new initiatives need to be monitored so that they have the impact leaders intend. In addition, although staff develop children's confidence in speaking well, they sometimes miss opportunities to ask children to respond at greater length.

Safeguarding is effective.

You and your staff put pupils' safety and welfare above all other considerations. New staff quickly receive induction training and all staff are given regular training in safeguarding. As a result, staff are vigilant. They understand fully their need to report immediately to you or your deputy safeguarding leads any suspicion that a child could be being harmed. Pupils are protected because staff understand and can describe a wide range of indicators, including subtle ones, which might suggest a pupil may be becoming the victim of abuse or exploitation.

You have ensured that all safeguarding arrangements are fit for purpose. You keep meticulous logs of all concerns and the brisk action you take for each one because of them. This allows you to see easily any historical records across families and shows evidence of your dogged determination to do all you can to support those pupils at risk. You make no apology for escalating a referral to an external agency if you feel the response you receive is insufficient or not sufficiently prompt. A very large

proportion of parents who responded to Parent View confirmed that the school keeps their child safe. A very small number of parents expressed some concerns about the behaviour of a tiny minority of pupils. However, all of the many pupils I met during my visit told me that they, their classmates and younger siblings felt safe in school, and that staff they trusted would quickly deal with any issues. Pupils across different year groups who completed the pupil questionnaire confirmed this view unanimously.

Pupils are given good information and guidance to keep themselves safe from a wide variety of risks, such as roads, strangers, train tracks, and electricity. They know not to give their personal details online to anyone they do not know well personally. They explained to me that the school teaches them to tell an adult they trust if they ever receive a message or image that makes them worried. Older pupils understand that the images of celebrity and beauty portrayed in the media are often unrealistic. They know that they should not be anxious or upset by comparing themselves to these.

Inspection findings

- A large majority of children enter the school in the Nursery with levels of skills in all areas of learning that are below or well below those typically found nationally. They make good progress from their starting points during the early years but you have identified that their progress in writing has not been rapid enough.
- You have made writing in the early years a priority in your action plan. The new early years leader is working with her colleagues to kindle children's interests in mark-making and early writing from their first days in school. During my visit, I saw compelling evidence of the many different ways children are now writing and the improvements in their skills as a result. However, you know that you need to monitor these new initiatives closely to ensure there is no slowing of momentum as the academic year continues. In addition, though staff put out imaginative resources for writing, they do not always make sure that they give children enough guidance how to use them.
- Staff in the early years speak to children effectively overall. They develop children's confidence and give them good choices about their work. However, they sometimes miss opportunities that require children to explain or recount things at greater length. This limits the growth in children's vocabulary and has a negative impact on their writing.
- Pupils' progress in key stage 1 and 2 is good in all subjects. At key stage 1, proportions of pupils attaining the expected levels in both reading and mathematics are close to national averages. Greater proportions attain a greater depth of understanding in these subjects at key stage 1. Pupils' attainment in writing is improving but it is not yet at the national average. You are attending to this across these key stages by better teaching. This includes improving pupils' skills in vocabulary and showing them how to write for different audiences and purposes.
- The provision for pupils who have special educational needs (SEN) and/or disabilities is good, enabling them to make good progress from their starting points. The teacher who coordinates this knows these pupils well, tracks their achievements closely, and helps teaching assistants to improve their effectiveness. Pupils in the enhanced resourced unit for autistic spectrum disorder are taught very

well so that their confidence and skills increase and their interaction with others develops. For example, I saw how staff were helping pupils to describe a sequence of events, and showing how to take account of others' needs when working together.

- The governing body checks that pupils who are disadvantaged make good overall progress from their starting points. They ensure that the pupil premium is spent effectively to accelerate pupils' academic progress. A proportion of this funding is also used appropriately to support those pupils who are distressed or vulnerable or who have other complex emotional needs, so they are ready to learn.

Next steps for the school

Leaders and those responsible for governance should ensure that leaders:

- monitor the effectiveness of recent initiatives to improve children's writing in the early years, adjusting these if necessary so that they are consistently effective
- check that the new resources for writing that staff are providing for children in the Nursery and Reception Year are being used sufficiently
- give children more opportunities to develop their confidence in speaking by talking at greater length.

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

Yours sincerely

Roary Pownall
Her Majesty's Inspector

Information about the inspection

During the inspection, I met you and shared my lines of enquiry. I also met with members of the governing body, the acting deputy headteacher and subject leader for English, the head of the early years, the deputy designated safeguarding leader, a Reception class teacher and the coordinator for pupils who have SEN and/or disabilities. I considered the responses of parents from Ofsted's online survey, Parent View, and any free-text comments. I scrutinised the responses to Ofsted's questionnaires for staff and pupils. We visited classes together in all key stages in the school. I observed pupils' behaviour in lessons, met with a large group of them at breaktime and looked at samples of pupils' work. I viewed a range of documents, including leaders' evaluation of the school's current performance and its plans for further improvement. I considered a number of policy documents, including those for safeguarding, and pupils who have SEN and/or disabilities. I examined the school's website to check that it meets requirements on the publication of specified information.