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Mrs Gayle Platt
Headteacher
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Dear Mrs Platt

Short inspection of Dersingham Voluntary Aided Primary School and Nursery

Following my visit to the school on 11 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 July 2014.

This school continues to be good.

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

Your passion for the pupils' education and the commitment of staff mean that pupils have rich learning experiences that enable them to make good progress. Pupils are very positive about the varied and stimulating curriculum they receive. The school's exceptional learning environment fosters curiosity and celebrates learning. For example, the long corridor is a visual feast depicting in three dimensions a timeline from the dinosaurs to the space age, featuring costumes, street scenes and pupils' work. This helps to give pupils a good understanding of the tide of history flowing through their land.

Leaders and governors manage the split site highly effectively, going out of their way to reduce the inconvenience for parents and carers who have children in both settings more than a mile apart. Children get off to a very strong start in the early years because the staff understand their needs extremely well and create a calm and inspirational place for them to work and play. Children were intrigued by penguin eggs as part of their topic on a polar theme. They enjoyed building igloos out of sugar lumps. Children can access the resources easily and are encouraged to make their own choices about learning, building their stamina and developing their

skills. The public spaces display natural resources in wonderful ways to fire children's enthusiasm.

Leaders' imaginative and innovative approach to the curriculum is reflected in the furniture in key stage 2 classrooms, where pupils can choose from a variety of work stations to suit themselves. These rooms are furnished in unusual and exciting ways that delight the pupils. Pupils fill their own 'floor books', which are oversized, sturdy volumes of work that contain most of their writing across a range of different subjects. The work is of a good quality and often set out creatively, making full use of the space available. The floor books build up over time to show the good progress that pupils make across the curriculum in well-presented and interesting ways. For example, pupils in Year 1 conducted an experiment to answer the question, 'Why do I have two eyes?' This was well written up and illustrated. In Year 4, pupils made a design for their own personal Roman standard and explained why it was significant to them.

The school has dealt effectively with the areas to improve from the previous inspection. Teachers now share good practice as a matter of course and all have coaching partners to help them become even more effective. The use of additional adults has become a strength of the school. Teaching assistants are well trained and make a valuable contribution to pupils' good progress. Parents are well informed about their children's work. They are mostly happy with communication, and most of those responding strongly agreed with the statements on Parent View, Ofsted's survey for parents.

Pupils have very positive attitudes to learning and a real voice. In particular, the pupil governors who make up the learning council feed into the school's monitoring procedures through making regular observations of teaching and learning across the school. In one class, they saw how the use of red, amber and green cups placed on their desks informed the teacher about pupils' understanding. As a result, this good practice was adopted across the school. Pupils also run a sports council, a school council and an eco council. One pupil commented, 'We are entitled to our own opinion.' In classrooms, pupils show respect to one another and their teachers, work hard and enjoy learning. The fact that work is tailored to their needs and interests them means that they are enthusiastic and willing to have a go.

Safeguarding is effective.

There is a positive culture of safeguarding that ensures all pupils are safe. A safeguarding team meets weekly to consider particular cases and to share relevant information. The school keeps meticulous records and works closely with external partners. Leaders are willing to challenge other agencies when necessary to make sure that the needs of pupils come first.

Staff are fully trained in all aspects of safeguarding, including combating extremism. Pupils said they felt safe in school and this was a view parents supported strongly.

Inspection findings

- In order to make sure that the school remains good, I identified a number of key lines of enquiry that we agreed at our initial meeting. First of all, we considered how leaders have improved progress and attainment at key stage 2 over the past year. In 2016, outcomes were disappointing, but these improved to above the national average by the end of key stage 2 in 2017.
- Some strong teacher appointments have improved the quality of teaching. Sharper tracking is helping leaders to identify pupils at risk of falling behind and enabling the school to put in place timely interventions to help them catch up. Pupil-progress meetings consider each pupil individually so that nothing is left to chance. Pupils who have special educational needs (SEN) and/or disabilities made strong progress in 2017 because of the high-quality support they received. In Year 6, additional teaching targeting pupils with particular needs enabled them to make accelerated progress and reach the expected standards.
- Next, we considered what you are doing to ensure that pupils have the skills they need in phonics. This was because the proportions of pupils reaching the required standard in phonics were below average in 2017 at Year 1 and Year 2.
- The school is beginning to reap the benefits of its baby room and pre-school, meaning that children in Reception and pupils in Year 1 are well prepared for learning. Speech and language challenges are identified early on. Teachers are analysing pupils' awareness of phonics more systematically and checking their progress every month. They are providing interventions as soon as they are needed, enabling pupils to make faster progress than in previous years. The current Year 1 pupils are on course to reach the national average for the required standard in phonics this year.
- We saw that phonics is taught well in Year 1, and pupils use their phonic skills when they read. They are building confidence in their reading.
- Finally, we considered what leaders are doing to improve attendance. This was because attendance has been below average for the past two years.
- Leaders work closely with families where attendance is a concern. Sometimes this is because of long-term medical issues over which the school has no control. The school has also set up a 'gallery of 100% attendance' to celebrate those pupils who have not missed any school. While not yet at the national average, attendance is improving this year, and persistent absence has reduced considerably. However, the attendance of pupils known to be eligible for free school meals still falls behind that of other pupils.

Next steps for the school

Leaders and those responsible for governance should ensure that:

- pupils remain on track to achieve the expected standard in phonics so that results by the end of Year 1 and Year 2 are at least in line with the national average and pupils become confident readers
- they continue to impress upon families the importance of attendance so that it

rises at least to the national average, while persistent absence reduces, especially for pupils known to be eligible for free school meals.

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

Yours sincerely

Nick Butt
Ofsted Inspector

Information about the inspection

During the inspection, I held meetings with you, other school leaders, four governors including the chair and pupils. I held a telephone conversation with a representative of the local authority. We visited all classrooms across both sites. I examined a range of documents, policies and assessment information. I considered 66 responses from parents to Ofsted's questionnaire, Parent View, and spoke to parents in the playground before school.