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Mr Tony Cox
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Dear Mr Cox

Short inspection of Long Buckby Junior School

Following my visit to the school on 5 June 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 January 2015.

This school continues to be good.

The leadership team has maintained the good quality of education in the school since the last inspection. You have driven improvements across the school. The governing body recognises your strengths and the impact you have had on improving teaching and pupils' outcomes. New appointments to the senior leadership team and within the teaching staff have brought new skills and opportunities to the school in areas such as sport and art. The acting assistant headteacher provides you with strong support. Those staff who are more experienced welcome the opportunity to mentor those new to the profession. You, in partnership with members of the governing body, strategically plan opportunities for all staff to flourish professionally.

You and your staff, along with members of the governing body, have created a culture where parents, carers and pupils feel that everyone is valued as an individual. Teachers and teaching assistants know the children well and support them academically and pastorally. Children value their teachers. They told me that they always have someone they can talk to, and one pupil told me that the teachers 'are all amazing!' Pupils know that adults in the school will always support them when needed. Pupils talk enthusiastically about the peer mentor scheme. Pupils value the reward systems and especially the Friday assembly where their achievements, both in and out of school, are recognised.

The curriculum is engaging, and pupils enjoy the range of activities linked to creative topics. For example, a trip to Cadbury World was linked to the topic about Aztecs. A surprise boating trip was linked to the 'Sail Away' topic. Writing across the curriculum

is strong and written work is well presented across the year groups. Pupils told me that they enjoy the lessons the teachers plan. Displays around the school reflect the exciting opportunities available.

Pupils achieve well across the school in reading and writing, and reach the standards expected of them. However, not enough pupils reach the levels expected of them in mathematics, and they do not always make enough progress in this subject. You recognise that not enough children achieve greater depth in all subjects.

Pupils who have special educational needs (SEN) and/or disabilities are supported well, and parents spoke highly of the support given to them and the improvements they have seen in their children's confidence and attainment. Additional support, such as reduced timetables, behaviour support from external agencies and individual support in lessons, is effective in ensuring that the most vulnerable pupils achieve well. Behaviour in lessons and around the school is consistently positive, and pupils conduct themselves well.

Governance is effective. The governing body has ensured that secure monitoring procedures are in place. Members of the governing body regularly evaluate the school's strength and progress made towards addressing weaknesses. More recently, members of the governing body have been involved in the development of mathematics across the school. They are kept informed about the progress of pupils; however, this is not always broken down to the detailed progress of all groups, for example higher-ability pupils. The governor with responsibility for safeguarding checks the school's procedures for keeping children safe and ensures that all members of the governing body have regular training. Additional funding, including the pupil premium and the physical education (PE) and sport premium, is used well. The way it is spent is reported to governors. However, members of the governing body do not rigorously check the impact of this spending on the attainment of disadvantaged pupils or the involvement of pupils in sporting activities, for example.

At the time of the last inspection you were asked to improve the quality of teaching and speed up pupils' progress by ensuring that teachers made it clear to pupils at the outset what they should have learned by the end of a lesson. Observations during this inspection, discussions with pupils and scrutiny of their work confirmed that currently pupils are clear on what they are learning and how to improve their work. Teachers adapt their plans throughout the lesson to meet the needs of individual learners. This helps to ensure that everyone is making progress. Books demonstrate effective progress in writing and mathematics. The emphasis on discussion in lessons is helping pupils develop a greater depth of understanding.

You were asked to improve leadership and management by ensuring that subject leaders focused on pupils' progress during monitoring and better supported improvements to teaching. You and your assistant headteacher model effective subject leadership. Your monitoring schedule is rigorous and the impact of subject leaders' actions can clearly be seen in all subjects. For example, following monitoring in mathematics, the structure of mathematics lessons was adapted to incorporate more opportunities to develop pupils' reasoning skills.

Since the last inspection, you have ensured that the quality of teaching has remained good. While pupils' outcomes in mathematics in the end of key stage 2 tests remain below national averages, the current evidence available for pupils in school shows a more positive picture. This is reflective of the good standard of provision across the school.

Safeguarding is effective.

All staff are vigilant of pupils' welfare. Staff and governors receive regular training and know the signs to look out for when checking pupils' welfare. They know the correct procedures to follow should they have any concerns about a pupil's well-being.

Safeguarding records are detailed and stored securely, and the chair of the governing body makes checks to make sure that they remain robust. Pupils know how to keep themselves safe in a range of situations, including online. Pupils feel that behaviour is good in school. They confidently told me that they feel safe in school and know that if needed, an adult will always help them. The school has introduced a range of activities and opportunities to improve pupils' welfare, for example reading with Angus the dog, who the pupils told me helps them feel calm and relaxed.

Inspection findings

- The proportion of pupils achieving expected levels in mathematics at the end of key stage 2 rose in 2017. However, this remained below the national average. You have taken on the responsibility for the leadership of mathematics and you have made focused and measured decisions on the best approach for teaching and learning. More opportunities are provided for pupils to apply their understanding to solve mathematical problems in lessons. Staff training is clearly starting to have a positive impact on how pupils are learning in mathematics. Pupils also recognise the changes that have been introduced to their mathematics lessons and clearly enjoy the challenge and opportunities to talk and reason more in mathematics. Current school data shows a positive picture, with many more pupils working at the expected level for their age. Pupils' workbooks in mathematics are starting to show that pupils are given challenging work that takes their learning beyond the basics of arithmetic and ensures that they can use the skills they have learned in mathematics. This was less evident in some year groups, and not all teachers regularly build reasoning opportunities into lessons.
- In 2017, the proportion of pupils achieving greater depth in all subjects remained below the national average, and you recognise that even more pupils should be achieving this milestone. Current school data shows that more pupils are achieving greater depth in most year groups and subjects. In pupils' work and in lessons, we saw many good examples of high levels of challenge. However, we saw in pupils' books that teachers' expectations of pupils' writing are not always high enough and pupils are not given accurate guidance on how to improve their writing further. Assessments and tracking of the most able pupils are not regularly shared with members of the governing body, and teachers are not consistently helping pupils to reach higher levels.

- Persistent absence has increased over the last year. You know families exceptionally well and put a lot of small but effective strategies in place to support individual pupils. Persistent absence is now declining.

Next steps for the school

Leaders and those responsible for governance should ensure that:

- teachers plan appropriately challenging work in lessons so that all pupils achieve as well as they can, and data on the performance of all groups of pupils is regularly shared with governors
- new developments in mathematics, particularly opportunities for reasoning, are consistently embedded in lessons and pupils' work across the whole school
- the spending of additional funding, including the pupil premium and the PE and sport premium, is rigorously analysed and reported against the impact on pupils' learning.

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

Rebecca Ellers
Ofsted Inspector

Information about the inspection

During this short inspection, I met with you, two members of the governing body and the school bursar. I had a telephone conversation with a representative from the local authority. I spoke with pupils when you, your acting assistant headteacher and I visited every class together to observe learning taking place. I also spoke with a group of pupils and with several parents as they brought their children to school. I considered the views of parents through their responses to the Ofsted online survey, Parent View. I took into consideration the views of all your staff and 12 pupils through their responses to the Ofsted questionnaires.

Together with your acting assistant headteacher, we examined a range of pupils' workbooks. I scrutinised a range of school documentation, including that related to the safeguarding of pupils, the school's improvement plan and self-evaluation, and the school's data and tracking.