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Mr Robert Edwards  
Headteacher  
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Dear Mr Edwards

### **Short inspection of Sprowston Infant School**

Following my visit to the school on 31 January 2019, 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 2015.

Based on the evidence gathered during this short inspection, I have identified some priorities for improvement which I advise the school to address. In light of these priorities, the school's next inspection will be a full section 5 inspection. **There is no change to the school's current overall effectiveness grade of good as a result of this inspection.**

Sprowston Infant School is a school where all staff and governors are committed to ensuring that pupils enjoy their learning and develop into caring and well-rounded individuals. You and your deputy headteacher work together very well. You are reflective when considering the school's strengths and how you can further improve the school. You have acted on the areas for improvement from the previous inspection. For example, you have increased the proportion of pupils in the early years reaching a good level of development, which is now similar to that found nationally. You have improved pupils' learning in mathematics and introduced a curriculum which includes challenges across areas of learning to extend the most able pupils. Nevertheless, you have identified in your improvement plans that further work is needed to ensure that the most able pupils are sufficiently challenged across the curriculum.

Your approach to the curriculum is child-centred and staff carefully consider pupils' individual needs and enthusiasms. Adults plan activities and tasks which pupils enjoy. This is particularly evident in the Reception classes, where children have the opportunity to learn outside, using tools in the workshop, riding bikes and climbing on equipment, as well as inside where they enjoy choosing from the wide-ranging challenges on offer. Teachers and other adults work together effectively to support children's learning. You have recently introduced this approach to Year 1 and to the

afternoons in Year 2. You are working with staff to ensure that provision here is as effective as in the Reception classes.

You check the quality of teaching and learning, mostly through informal visits to classes and through regular pupil progress meetings with teachers. However, you have not developed sufficiently robust systems for checking the progress that pupils are making. The views of class teachers are not compared regularly enough with, for example, pupils' work, teachers' assessments or information provided by talking with samples of pupils.

The care provided for individual pupils is a strength of the school. You and other leaders work with individuals and their families sensitively to ensure that pupils' emotional, social and mental health needs are well met in school. The school is very inclusive. Pupils in the school's resource base are included as part of the whole school. They are supported in joining mainstream lessons and activities when it is appropriate for them to do so. They develop increasing independence and confidence in social interactions.

Governors provide good support for you and other leaders and fulfil their statutory responsibilities. They have confidence in you and appreciate the careful consideration you give to the curriculum. They know the school well, visiting regularly with an increasingly sharp focus on aspects of the school's development plan for which each governor has responsibility. Governors provide appropriate challenge alongside their support. For example, they challenge you about aspects of finance and have asked for more in-depth information about the progress of disadvantaged pupils in the school.

Pupils enjoy school. Those spoken with during the inspection said that school is a happy place and that there is always someone to help them when they are worried or upset. They enjoy all the activities provided during the school day and through clubs such as fencing, painting and fitness. Pupils enjoy visits such as their recent visit to Norwich Cathedral, which one pupil described as 'awesome'. Parents are also highly appreciative of the school's work. The vast majority of parents who responded to Ofsted's online survey, Parent View, said that they would recommend the school to another parent. One parent's comment typifies others' views: 'Both my children have loved this school. The learning by play is fantastic.'

### **Safeguarding is effective.**

You, other designated leads for safeguarding and all staff have keeping pupils safe as a key priority and have ensured that all safeguarding arrangements are fit for purpose. You ensure that staff training is kept up to date. This training is effective and staff know what to look for that may indicate a child is at risk of harm. Leaders follow up all concerns tenaciously and ensure that support for pupils and their families is provided when needed. You liaise with external professionals and maintain clear records of all actions taken. All checks on staff are carried out according to requirements.

You work with individual pupils and with all pupils to address issues which they may encounter, teaching them, for example, about respecting others and controlling their emotions. You also teach pupils about other aspects of safety. Consequently, pupils

spoken with during the inspection knew that they should not share personal information with strangers or with anyone online. Pupils said that they feel safe in school and all parents who responded to Ofsted's online survey agreed that their children are safe in school.

## **Inspection findings**

- The first area we agreed I would focus on during the inspection was how effectively reading is taught. I wanted to understand what you and other leaders were doing to ensure that boys and girls achieve equally well in reading in the early years and Year 1. This was because published data indicated that in previous years boys did not achieve as well as girls in the school.
- Over the past three years, the proportion of pupils reaching the expected standard in the Year 1 phonics screening check has been close to that found nationally. However, in 2018 almost half of those pupils who had not met the expected standard in Year 1 and were rechecked in Year 2 did not meet the expected standard.
- I observed phonics teaching in the early years and in Year 1. I found that especially in the Reception classes teaching was lively and engaging. Pupils were keen to participate and were developing secure knowledge of sounds. Good links are made between sounds and letter formation. I read with pupils, including some who had not reached the expected standard in Year 1. These pupils read with confidence, using books which were well-matched to their phonic knowledge.
- I discussed reading with you and the English subject leader. You explained that extra reading books had been purchased to capture the interest of boys specifically. I also saw pupils reading books chosen by teachers to link areas of learning so that pupils see reading as purposeful. I found that careful checks are kept on pupils' phonic knowledge and these show that pupils are learning the sounds appropriately. However, insufficient checks are made on pupils' progress in their wider reading skills to enable leaders to provide support where needed in the teaching of reading.
- I also looked at whether boys and girls are making equally good progress in writing. This was because in previous years, in writing, boys achieved less well at the end of Year 2 than girls in the school.
- I looked at pupils' writing in Year 2 and found that most pupils are making good progress in writing from their starting points. However, I also found that the standard of some boys' writing was not as high as for girls. Leaders explained that work has begun to improve handwriting and pupils' fine motor skills as this has been identified as an area of difficulty for some pupils, many of whom are boys. This work is at an early stage and yet to show clear impact.
- I saw that the school's approach to the curriculum is designed to integrate writing across areas of learning in all year groups. This is working more effectively in some classes than in others. In some classes the standard of writing expected in different areas of learning is not as high as when pupils write in specific writing sessions.
- The final area I looked at in detail was the support provided for disadvantaged pupils. I wanted to check whether this was enabling pupils to make good progress and to reach the standard expected for their age. In previous years, published data

for all year groups showed that disadvantaged pupils have not achieved as well as their peers.

- I found that good support is in place to meet pupils' social and emotional needs as well as support for pupils' academic needs. A pastoral support worker has been appointed who works with pupils and their families and new programmes of support have been introduced quite recently, which are beginning to improve aspects such as pupils' self-esteem and confidence.
- Support for parents and leaders' rigorous follow-up of attendance issues have improved the attendance of disadvantaged pupils. This is now similar to the attendance of all pupils in the school. Very few disadvantaged pupils currently in the school are persistently absent.
- You and other leaders know pupils well and their individual barriers to learning. This is not, however, clearly reflected in your published plans for the use of pupil premium funding. You consider the needs of each pupil, including those who are disadvantaged, during your regular pupil progress meetings. However, your checks on the impact of support for disadvantaged pupils on their progress is not sharp enough to identify where support is proving more, or less, effective. Consequently, some disadvantaged pupils continue to achieve less well than their peers.

### **Next steps for the school**

Leaders and those responsible for governance should ensure that:

- leaders more sharply evaluate the support provided for disadvantaged pupils to ensure that it enables pupils to make the progress they need to reach the standard expected for their age
- the school's published pupil premium strategy includes the barriers to pupils' learning
- leaders develop more rigorous systems for checking information provided by teachers about the progress pupils are making
- subject leaders check the quality of teaching and learning in reading more regularly and use this information to identify where support is needed to further improve pupils' progress, particularly the progress of boys.

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

Yours sincerely

Maria Curry  
**Her Majesty's Inspector**

## **Information about the inspection**

During the inspection, I met with you and the deputy headteacher, the subject leader for English and with three governors. I also met with a group of pupils from each year group. I scrutinised a range of documents, including: information on pupils' progress, safeguarding and development planning; and the school's self-evaluation. I visited all classes and evaluated pupils' work. I took account of 15 responses to Ofsted's online questionnaire, Parent View, and to 23 responses to Ofsted's staff survey.