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Ms Heidi Jordan
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Dear Ms Jordan

Short inspection of Spixworth Infant School

Following my visit to the school on 21 March 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 2014.

This school continues to be good.

The leadership team has maintained the good quality of education in the school since the last inspection. Spixworth Infant School is a school which, as one governor rightly said, cares for the whole child. You, all staff and governors are determined to ensure that pupils make good progress academically but also develop into well-rounded, caring individuals. This is reflected in the emphasis you give to developing pupils' spiritual, moral, social and cultural understanding. For example, pupils consider 'big questions' in philosophy such as what it means to be truly happy. You have made sure that playtimes are positive social experiences, providing lots of different equipment and setting up games and activities. Since becoming the substantive headteacher in September 2017, you have set about ensuring that your high expectations are shared by staff and governors. You have quickly built a staff team who work together well and are building on the school's strengths and taking action to secure further improvements for the school.

Issues identified in the previous inspection report have been addressed successfully. One of these was to raise the proportion of pupils reaching the expected standard in phonics. Phonics outcomes have steadily risen and are now above the national average. The other area for improvement was to improve the use of the sports premium funding. This has also been addressed. Physical education has a high profile in the school, with lots of different sporting activities, events and opportunities for pupils such as running the daily mile which all pupils take part in.

You are determined to ensure that all staff play their role in securing further improvements for the school. You provide good support for staff professional development and this is valued and having a positive effect in developing leadership across the school. Staff who responded to the Ofsted questionnaire said that they feel trusted and respected. A testament to the positive ethos you have created is that everyone who responded said that they enjoy working at the school and are proud to be members of staff.

Governors are confident in your leadership but recognise that you are new to the role. They have put in place good-quality support to help you develop your skills further. Governors hold leaders to account appropriately, providing measured support and challenge. They recognise that they have had insufficiently detailed information about the progress of pupils who have special educational needs (SEN) and/or disabilities to evaluate the effectiveness of support as fully as they should do.

Teaching is good. Teachers have highly positive relationships with pupils. From the time they start school, children learn what is expected in terms of behaviour and working together because adults reinforce this regularly. Children in the early years are cooperative, share resources sensibly and respond swiftly to adult direction. The newly developed outdoor area is an attractive area which is well used for learning. Teachers plan work which is interesting and so pupils are keen to learn. They ask questions which make pupils think and set work which is appropriately challenging for pupils of differing abilities. The vast majority of additional adults make a strong contribution to learning, providing support for individual pupils and groups, and working in partnership with teachers well. Most teachers have high expectations of pupils and so pupils make good progress from their starting points. Occasionally in some classes, pupils become over enthusiastic and noise levels rise too high so it is difficult for others to concentrate.

Pupils enjoy school. As one pupil said, 'because I love learning'. Pupils told me that teachers expect them to work hard but they also spoke about the nurturing and supportive atmosphere at school. They said that adults help them when there are rare problems at playtimes but that behaviour is generally good.

Parents are also very supportive of the school. Almost every parent who responded to Ofsted's online questionnaire, Parent View, said that they would recommend the school to another parent. They particularly value the interesting curriculum and the support provided by all adults for their children. Reflective of the views of many was a comment by one parent who said, 'I have nothing but good things to say about Spixworth Infant school... The passion and enthusiasm that Ms Jordan has for the school is commendable.' Another parent commented, 'All staff go above and beyond to meet the needs of the children both academically and emotionally. Spixworth Infant School is a lovely school where children thrive in a safe, stimulating and caring environment.' This is because you and all staff take time to listen to parents, explain any changes and take account of their views well.

Safeguarding is effective.

Leaders ensure that all staff recognise the importance of keeping pupils safe and know the policies and procedures in place for this. Checks on staff are carried out methodically and in line with statutory requirements. Training for staff is regular and thorough and you check that staff have retained the key messages following training. You keep safeguarding issues at the forefront by issuing a regular newsletter with updates and reminders. As a result, staff are very aware of what to look for that may indicate a child is at risk of harm. This is reflected in the concerns forms that we looked at together. Pupil files also showed that action is taken swiftly to address any serious concerns and leaders work with external agencies to ensure that support is provided when needed.

Pupils say that school is a safe place and there is always an adult to speak to if they are upset or worried. They told me that bullying is extremely rare in school. Pupils know how to keep themselves safe. Those pupils I spoke to during the inspection were very well able to articulate what information they should and should not share when online, and what to do if they encounter something which frightens or worries them. Parents who responded to Ofsted's online questionnaire agree that pupils are safe in school.

Inspection findings

- At the start of the inspection we agreed the main areas that I would look at during the inspection. The first of these was the progress that pupils are making in writing. This was because published information about Year 1 phonics outcomes and Year 2 reading outcomes showed that standards in reading had steadily risen since the previous inspection. By contrast, outcomes at the end of Year 2 for writing were more static.
- Together, we looked at pupils' writing in their English books and agreed that in most instances pupils are making good progress in writing. Progress is especially rapid in some classes, such as in Year 1 where teachers' expectations are particularly high and there is strong emphasis placed on developing more complex sentence structures and widening pupils' vocabulary.
- Teachers think carefully about how to stimulate pupils' imagination in writing. For example, during the inspection pupils were developing their descriptive vocabulary by moving a figure around model houses that they had made and imagining what the figure would see, in readiness for writing.
- Good opportunities are provided for writing across the curriculum. For example, I saw good-quality writing in science about experiments and examples of pupils' writing in mathematics explaining how to solve problems.
- In some classes, teachers do not insist that pupils remember some basics in writing such as to use full stops and capital letters, and to refer to their spelling lists when writing, when pupils are capable of doing so. As a result, some pupils are not making as consistently strong progress in writing as others because some teachers' expectations are not as high as they should be.

- Next, I looked at the progress pupils are making across the broader curriculum. You rightly told me that the breadth of the curriculum is a strength of the school. I found that pupils benefit from lots of interesting opportunities for learning. For example, pupils regularly carry out science experiments and think carefully about what they have learned about scientific concepts by doing so. Pupils enjoy the enrichment afternoons when they learn many different things such as first aid, yoga and Makaton. These sessions are carefully planned and evaluated to check that quality learning takes place. Clubs at lunchtimes and after school also enhance pupils' learning experiences. The outdoor area is increasingly well used for learning also, for example through 'forest school' and leaders are planning a project to develop outdoor learning in English and mathematics.
- You acknowledge that while assessment systems have been implemented for foundation subjects, such as history and geography, their use is at an early stage. Some observations recorded by teachers are too general and do not provide sufficient evidence of individual pupils' learning and progress in these subjects.
- The final area I looked at during the inspection was the progress that pupils who have SEN and/or disabilities are making. I found that an appropriate range of support is provided for these pupils, for example for speech and language development, to help pupils learn phonics, and support for handwriting. Consequently, most pupils make good progress from their starting points in relation to their small targets.
- Leaders have ensured that all staff understand the criteria for inclusion on the special educational needs register. Careful plans are drawn up for individual pupils. Leaders are keen to increase the input from pupils and their parents in these plans.
- Leaders discuss pupils' needs with teachers regularly and visit classes to check the provision for pupils. However, the leader for SEN (SENCo) does not have sufficiently detailed information about pupils' progress in reading, writing and mathematics to be able to fully evaluate the support put in place. Governors therefore do not receive sufficient detail about this to judge if funding for special educational needs is used for maximum benefit.

Next steps for the school

Leaders and those responsible for governance should ensure that:

- all teachers have equally high expectations of the quality and quantity of pupils' writing
- leaders have more detailed information about the progress of pupils who have SEN and/or disabilities and so that they and governors are able to evaluate the effectiveness of support more sharply
- assessment systems for foundation subjects such as history and geography are better used to show the progress pupils make in these subjects so that leaders can identify where progress is best and where improvements may be needed in teaching and 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 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 senior teacher, leaders for mathematics, English and special educational needs, and with three governors. I met with a group of pupils from the Reception Year and Years 1 and 2. I scrutinised a range of documents, including information on pupils' progress, safeguarding, development planning and the school's self-evaluation. I visited all classes and evaluated pupils' work. I took account of 21 responses to Ofsted's online questionnaire, Parent View, and to the responses to Ofsted's staff and pupil surveys.