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Mrs Sue Goodsell
Headteacher
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Dear Mrs Goodsell

Short inspection of The Spalding Monkshouse Primary School

Following my visit to the school on 1 May 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 in good in November 2013.

The school continues to be good.

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

Working alongside a strong and enthusiastic team of leaders, you have created a special ethos that is highly praised by staff, pupils and parents and carers. You are an excellent role model for staff and pupils. Your high expectations are reflected in the quality of provision, the dedication of staff and the exemplary attitudes of pupils to their learning.

The many parents who completed the Ofsted online questionnaire, Parent View, and sent additional comments, are overwhelmingly positive about the school, and especially about your leadership. Almost all would recommend the school to other families. Parents are rightly effusive about your commitment and determination to ensure that all pupils achieve the very best during their time at the school. Typical of parents' comments, one wrote, 'Everything about the school, the staff and pupils radiate a positive energy and attitude to learning. A great school.'

The school is a vibrant learning community, with interested, enthusiastic pupils and energetic staff. Pupils have positive attitudes to learning. They enjoy finding out new things and work very well together. Teachers have high expectations of them. Pupils take pride in their work and this is reflected in the neat presentation in their books and in their tidy handwriting.

You have worked effectively to maintain and build on the many strengths identified at your previous inspection and to tackle the areas for improvement. Leaders were asked to ensure that planning in the Nursery and Reception classes links activities being taught indoors and outdoors more closely in order to give children the opportunity to acquire new skills more quickly. They were also asked to strengthen the support for pupils who have special educational needs (SEN) and/or disabilities. Although there is more to do, both of these areas have continued to improve. The increased level of expectation for children in early years and pupils who have SEN and/or disabilities is evident in the work that I saw during this inspection. It is also evident in the progress of pupils who are on track to achieve national standards.

The school not only ensures that pupils do well academically but supports the development of other skills by offering a rich and vibrant curriculum. The 'outdoors curriculum' gives pupils memorable experiences and enables them to excel in music, drama, the arts, information and communication technology (ICT) and sport. Pupils enthusiastically describe how they have developed their design skills while building shelters in the school grounds and were excited to learn about ICT applications from a visiting expert.

Governors know the school well. They consider progress against the school's termly targets at each meeting. Minutes of the meetings show that they ask probing questions and report back on their regular visits to the school to fully understand the progress being made by the school. They have supported the development of the senior team and the appointment of independent specialist teachers. For example, specialist speech and language teachers ensure that pupils who have language difficulties and those new to English can make good progress. Governors recognise that more can be done to raise standards in mathematics and for some disadvantaged pupils who have complex needs.

Safeguarding is effective

You have ensured that the culture of safeguarding permeates the work of the school. There is strong pastoral support for pupils and their families. You have invested heavily in additional support for children who have SEN and/or disabilities and those who have language difficulties. Leaders keep careful records of concerns and work closely with other agencies. They will challenge these agencies if they are not happy with any decisions that are made that affect their pupils.

The single central record of employment checks is complete and thorough, additionally building up a listing of the safeguarding training that all adults have received. Staff work hard to engage parents and have established positive relationships with families over time. They have built up a level of trust whereby families approach the school for support. Pupils said that they feel safe in school and bullying is not an issue. They said that they can approach staff with any concerns and are confident that they would be dealt with.

Inspection findings

- I identified a number of lines of enquiry that we agreed at the initial meeting. First, we considered how well pupils achieve in mathematics. The attainment of pupils across the school is regularly higher than that found nationally. However, in 2017, key stage 2 pupils' progress from their starting points was slightly below that found nationally in mathematics, in contrast to reading and writing in the school which were above national averages.
- You and your team have analysed the reasons for pupils' progress in mathematics being below average. You have rightly decided to introduce a new mathematics scheme. During the inspection, we observed pupils being challenged to think hard about what they were learning. Pupils are starting to apply what they already know using a range of different strategies.
- The actions you have taken are already having an impact on pupils' learning. We looked at pupils' books and found that these showed that a good range of mathematical skills are taught. Teachers use an increased range of resources to support understanding across all classes. Pupils are now making better progress, but you agreed with me that pupils need to be given more opportunities to develop their reasoning skills.
- Next, we considered what the school is doing to ensure that disadvantaged pupils and those who have SEN and/or disabilities make as good progress as other pupils. This is because differences were evident between the progress of these pupils and that of others in 2017. Also, since the last inspection, there has been a steady increase in the proportion of pupils who have SEN and/or disabilities and the proportion who speak English as an additional language.
- The special educational needs coordinator has developed strong classroom support to enable these pupils to make good progress over time. During our visits to lessons, we saw teaching assistants, some multilingual, use a variety of well-chosen strategies and resources to enable pupils who have SEN and/or disabilities, and in many cases are also disadvantaged, to access their learning fully.
- Work in pupils' books shows that those who have SEN and/or disabilities are making increasingly good progress as they move through Years 5 and 6. You recognise that there is still work to be done to diminish these differences in some other year groups, including in the current Year 4. While disadvantaged pupils make good progress, in some cases they do not make enough accelerated progress to catch up with their classmates, who also achieve well.
- Finally, we considered how well middle leaders raised standards in their different subjects. Middle leaders assess and track pupils' progress effectively. They are using this information and progress information recorded electronically by pupils to gain an overview of standards in their subjects. This is supported through timely training for all staff to improve their subject knowledge and provision. This more rigorous approach has contributed to the rise in standards in subjects other than English and mathematics

Next steps for the school

Leaders and those responsible for governance should ensure that:

- pupils in mathematics classes are moved quickly onto the most challenging work and develop their reasoning skills further
- they continue to diminish the differences in progress made by disadvantaged pupils and those who have SEN and/or disabilities compared with others by the end of each key stage.

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

Yours sincerely

Philip Garnham
Ofsted Inspector

Information about the inspection

During the inspection, I held meetings with you, other school leaders, three governors including the chair of the governing body, a local authority representative and pupils. We visited all classrooms. I examined a range of documents, policies and assessment information. I considered the 40 responses from parents to Ofsted's questionnaire, Parent View, and the 35 free-text responses. I also spoke to parents in the playground before school. I also noted responses by pupils and staff to their respective questionnaires.