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Dear Mrs Board

Short inspection of Marsham Primary School

Following my visit to the school on 8 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 April 2015.

This school continues to be good.

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

Marsham school is a small, welcoming and very friendly school which provides a calm nurturing environment for pupils. Pupils spoke to me about the school, one pupil echoing the views of others when he said, 'we are all friends in this school.' You work effectively with your team, drawing up clear and well-structured plans for improvement, which are carefully implemented and evaluated. These are based on detailed evidence gathered from different sources, for example from your checks on the quality of teaching, by looking at pupils' work and through regular discussions with staff about the progress of pupils in their class. You have addressed the area for improvement around mathematics identified in the previous inspection report. This was one of the key lines of enquiry during the inspection and is reported on below. You, staff and governors are all equally ambitious for pupils and determined to continue to improve the school further. You are outward looking, and staff and governors draw on external support and advice to improve the school further, for example from the local authority and from local schools within the cluster.

Governors are effective in supporting and challenging you and other leaders. They know the strengths and weaknesses of the school and ensure that they are given the right information to help them make sensible decisions, for example about finance and staffing across the two schools in the federation. The federation is effective in supporting both schools. For example, you have ensured that subject leaders work across the partnership. This is proving effective in enabling staff to develop their leadership skills and share expertise.

Pupils behave well in lessons and around the school. They speak highly of their teachers and of the support they receive in lessons. One area for improvement from the previous inspection report was to encourage pupils to think for themselves when they are stuck. You have addressed this effectively. One pupil told me 'You have to try your best first, and sometimes your friends can help you if you are stuck, but if you still don't get it, the teachers explain it again in a different way until you do.' Teaching is good, because teachers carefully plan for the differing needs in their mixed-aged classes, matching work to pupils' abilities well. Teachers plan interesting lessons across a range of subjects, and so pupils benefit from a broad and interesting curriculum, which is enhanced by trips, clubs and other activities. For example, pupils told me proudly about the benefits of taking care of the school chickens and how this taught them responsibility. Parents and carers who responded to Ofsted's online questionnaire Parent View were universally positive about the school, with all saying they would recommend the school to another parent.

Safeguarding is effective.

You and your alternate designated leaders for safeguarding are rigorous in ensuring that all aspects of safeguarding are fit for purpose and addressed meticulously. Checks on staff are thorough, as are checks on visitors to the school and the information supplied to them. You ensure that all staff receive regular training and that this has a direct impact on staff practice. For example, as a result of training, you now provide regular safeguarding newsletters to parents, most recently explaining the importance of alternative emergency contacts. Staff training is effective, as shown by the concerns forms that they complete. These show that staff know what to look for that may indicate when a child is at risk of harm. You and other designated leads are rigorous in following up concerns with external agencies and other bodies. Your pupil files show that concerns about pupils are followed up with the relevant authorities and that you are tenacious in ensuring that you receive the information and support that is needed to keep pupils safe. For example, you told me about action you took when pupil files did not arrive promptly when a pupil joined the school.

Pupils know how to keep themselves safe when online, because this is taught effectively. They know well what information they should and should not share when online. Pupils say the school is a very safe place and they are confident in talking to adults should they have a worry or concern. Pupils know what bullying is and is not, and say it is exceptionally rare at the school.

Inspection findings

- My first line of enquiry during the inspection was to look at the progress that disadvantaged pupils are making. This was because the published assessment information showed a mixed picture of progress for these pupils. Published assessment information relates to very small numbers of pupils, and we discussed the impact that one or two pupils can have on these figures. You know all pupils well and clearly articulated individual pupils' barriers to learning, the steps taken to overcome these and the impact of this support. You showed me the range of support that you provide for disadvantaged pupils. This includes academic support, social and emotional support and support for trips and other extra-curricular activities.

- I looked at examples of work for disadvantaged pupils and found that pupils in key stage 2 are making good progress, especially in writing, and so are achieving in line with their peers or are closer to so achieving than previously. This is because the careful support provided is well matched to pupils' individual needs.
- I found that pupils in the early years/key stage 1 class are well supported in relation to their social and emotional needs, so that some pupils are now better able to learn effectively. However, the support provided has yet to show as much impact on their academic progress as is needed. Consequently, some disadvantaged pupils are not making as much progress as they need to in order to reach the standard expected for their year group.
- We discussed the attendance of disadvantaged pupils and found that a small number of pupils are absent too frequently. You are addressing this with parents, using the school's attendance panel, because you recognise that this is impeding pupils' progress in school.
- The next area I looked at was the progress that pupils are making in reading and writing. This was because some pupils did not reach the expected standard in the year 1 phonics check and I wanted to see how well reading is taught. In addition, at the end of key stage 2 in 2018, few pupils reached the expected standard in writing.
- I met with the subject leader for English, who was new in post in September 2018. Under her leadership, the teaching of reading and writing has been revitalised. She has quickly identified areas for improvement and has implemented changes without delay, modelling the positive impact of these in her own classroom.
- Changes have been made to how writing is taught across the school, so that pupils are better able to apply what they have learned to their own writing. As a result, current pupils, especially in key stage 2, are making good progress in writing. Good opportunities for writing across the curriculum are provided, for example writing about science experiments, and writing about pupils' own imaginary dinosaur. Changes have also been made to the teaching of reading, with the introduction of class novels, which have been selected to increase pupils' interest and enthusiasm for reading while also expanding their vocabulary. Pupils told me that they enjoy their class reading sessions.
- I watched the teaching of phonics and found this to be effective. However, some pupils do not have reading books which match their phonic skills closely enough to enable pupils to practise at home what they have learned at school. This is slowing their progress in reading.
- The final area that I looked at during the inspection was how effectively mathematics is being taught in the school. This was because outcomes at the end of Year 6 were lower than found nationally last year. In addition, providing opportunities for reasoning and problem solving was an area for improvement in the previous inspection report.
- Leaders have carefully analysed the reasons for weaker mathematics outcomes. They have implemented changes in response to this which are proving effective. For example, there has been a greater focus on ensuring that pupils have greater fluency in number, which is proving effective. Several changes have been made to the mathematics curriculum, such as including more work on proportionality and fractions, because you and leaders identified that this was an area of weakness for pupils.
- The mathematics leader has identified that some pupils have in the past been taught misconceptions in mathematics, which is inhibiting their mathematical development. This

is being addressed by revisiting some mathematical concepts from previous years to ensure that all pupils have a firm grasp of these concepts so that they can successfully move on in their mathematical development.

- Staff training has been provided to ensure that current staff are confident in teaching all aspects of mathematics. However, no specific training has been provided for the school's teaching assistants to ensure that they are equally skilled in teaching mathematics in line with the school's approach. Leaders are implementing this training later in the academic year.
- I discussed with the mathematics leader how the school is developing problem solving, reasoning and the use of concrete resources and saw evidence that this is working effectively in pupils' mathematics work in both classes, and when speaking with pupils. The mathematics leader explained how checks on the quality of teaching and learning in mathematics are carried out, and the increased rigour with which this is now done to ensure that all pupils achieve well. New assessment systems have been introduced to ensure that any gaps in pupils' learning are swiftly identified and addressed. As a result, current pupils are making good progress in mathematics.

Next steps for the school

Leaders and those responsible for governance should ensure that:

- pupils' reading books in the early years and key stage 1 are well matched to their phonic skills, so they can practise what they have learned at school when at home and so make better progress in reading
- the progress of some disadvantaged pupils is improved by:
 - improving the attendance of those pupils who are absent too frequently
 - providing more sharply focused support for disadvantaged pupils in the early years and key stage 1 class, so that it has a greater impact on their academic progress.

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, subject leaders for English and mathematics, your business manager and four governors. I met with a group of pupils from Years 4, 5 and 6 and read with a small number of pupils. 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 11 responses to Ofsted's online questionnaire Parent View.