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2 October 2017

Mr Neil Aiken
Headteacher
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Dear Mr Aiken

Short inspection of Loddington CofE (VA) Primary School

Following my visit to the school on 12 September 2017, 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 predecessor school was judged to be good in June 2011.

This school continues to be good.

The leadership team has maintained the good quality of education in the school since the last inspection. Since your recent appointment, you have started to develop positive relationships with pupils, staff and the community. You value the importance of a warm and nurturing environment where every child has the opportunity to thrive. One pupil who spoke with the inspector said, 'We are a happy school where we treat each other with respect.' You have reinforced through school assemblies the school's values of peace, friendship, perseverance, respect, wisdom and trust. These values are evident in the pupils' positive relationships with each other. Pupils are keen to play and help each other in all aspects of school life.

Pupils are fully involved in the life of the school, with a range of committees, including an elected school council. Such roles and responsibilities support the pupils to use and apply their knowledge and to develop their social skills. For example, pupils who spoke with the inspector shared their enthusiasm for creating a spiritual garden as part of their work as the 'ethos committee'. They are proud of their achievements and know what they have to do to improve the garden further and to develop the ethos of their school.

Provisional information shows that the proportion of pupils achieving the expected and higher standards at the end of key stage 1, particularly in mathematics, dipped in 2017. You are aware of the specific needs of pupils in this year group and have put support in place.

For example, during our tour of the school together, we saw teaching assistants, working alongside the class teacher, supporting small groups of pupils so that misconceptions were addressed promptly during the lesson. We also saw teachers giving clear explanations of mathematical concepts and checking pupils' understanding through appropriate questioning. Pupils' workbooks show that they have lots of well-planned and meaningful opportunities to develop their problem-solving and reasoning skills in mathematics. Further, you are reviewing additional mathematics support programmes to ensure that more pupils make accelerated progress in mathematics across the school.

You recognise that a greater proportion of pupils are capable of achieving the higher standards of attainment at the end of key stage 2. During a learning walk, we looked at the quality of teaching and learning. You noted that some writing tasks were not challenging enough, particularly for higher-attaining pupils. You are addressing this issue with further training for the staff team. In addition, you are currently reviewing English teaching and learning programmes to ensure that they are meeting the needs of all pupils, particularly higher-attaining pupils. You have ensured that the school curriculum provides many enrichment opportunities so that pupils have opportunities to practise their writing skills across the school.

The school's current assessment system provides leaders with relevant information. However, it needs further refinement to show pupils' progress more clearly. You acknowledge that revisions to English and mathematics programmes will need to be reflected clearly in the school's new assessment system. You want to ensure that a range of pupil information supports teachers to make informed judgements about pupils' progress. You believe that it is critical that both teachers and governors have accurate information about pupils' outcomes that is easily understood and clearly organised.

The governing body is ambitious and committed to raising pupils' achievement. In recent times, they have appointed two new governors, who understand their roles and have attended training to ensure that they can fulfil their strategic role. The governing body is led by a knowledgeable and experienced chair of governors. Governors recognise that they need to present even greater challenge to leaders to hold them to account for pupils' progress. The trust and a national leader of governance have provided training and support to strengthen the governing body. Members of the governing body are determined to develop their skills further so that they provide increasingly strong leadership and support for the headteacher to continue to raise levels of achievement for all pupils.

Safeguarding is effective.

The school's comprehensive safeguarding policy is consistently applied, ensuring that children are kept safe. Where concerns exist, you provide bespoke support and interventions to help protect pupils who may be vulnerable. Your partnership work with a range of external agencies ensures that specialist help is provided where needed. You showed me a number of files which demonstrate that staff make prompt referrals when they do have any concerns and that leaders are vigilant in following up any further actions needed with external agencies.

Governors have a secure understanding of their safeguarding responsibilities and carry out their duties rigorously. They regularly monitor the implementation of the school's policy and ensure that the single central record is compliant. They support leaders in identifying aspects of practice that can be further strengthened and routinely monitor these improvements.

Pupils describe that they are happy and know who they would go to if they had a problem. They know how to stay safe online and speak fluently about strategies to reduce online risks. Pupils say that bullying is rare, but if it does happen, they trust staff to deal with it quickly and effectively. Pupils told me how the school teaches them to be respectful and tolerant of differences. One pupil said, 'We treat each other how we would like to be treated.' Pupils are well prepared for life in modern Britain.

Along with governors, you have ensured that all safeguarding arrangements are fit for purpose and records are detailed and of high quality.

Inspection findings

- You and your staff have created a purposeful atmosphere of learning in lessons. Pupils are clear about what they are learning and are, therefore, swift to start and move between tasks. This enables pupils to build successfully on their prior knowledge and make good progress.
- During lessons, teachers give clear explanations and reshape pupils' learning appropriately. For example, during the inspection we saw pupils who were learning their phonic sounds. The teacher ensured that pupils knew the meaning of words such as 'acrobat'. One pupil responded to the teacher's explanation with, 'I can do a roly-poly like an acrobat.'
- Teaching assistants provide good support for pupils who have special educational needs and/or disabilities and for lower-attaining pupils. Pupils are encouraged to persevere in their work and are well supported when they make mistakes. Teaching assistants provide effective support in class for pupils because they take the time to understand their specific needs and support learning through careful questions. Consequently, these pupils make good progress and become confident learners.
- You and your staff work well with external agencies to provide bespoke support for pupils who have specific learning needs. Teachers are responsive to pupils' needs and ensure that the necessary support is put in place through additional learning opportunities. School information shows that these pupils are making rapid progress.
- You work with other local schools to ensure that your assessments are accurate. You also use the expertise of a teacher within the school, who is a local authority moderator, to work with staff and moderate their assessments of pupils. Teachers use assessment information about pupils to plan learning that is appropriate for most pupils from their starting points. Leaders regularly monitor pupils' assessment information and provide timely intervention to any pupil who is falling behind. However, you recognise that further development of the school's tracking system will support leaders and teachers to organise information so that they can even more accurately track pupils' progress.

- Parents who responded to Ofsted's free-text service expressed an overwhelming satisfaction with the care and support given to their children. One parent expressed the views of many by stating that 'children's differences are valued'. Parents acknowledged the positive ethos of the school and the caring environment.
- You are aware of the high absence and persistent absence rates for the group of pupils who have an education, health and care plan and/or a statement of special educational needs. However, this has been adversely affected by a very small number of pupils with highly complex needs. You have appropriately provided a comprehensive package of support for these pupils that includes working with other external agencies.

Next steps for the school

Leaders and those responsible for governance should ensure that:

- teachers provide tasks that challenge higher-attaining pupils sufficiently, so that a greater proportion of these pupils make rapid progress to achieve the higher standard at the end of key stage 1 and key stage 2
- leaders further develop the school's tracking system so that they are able to track pupils' progress more precisely
- the skills and knowledge of the governing body are fully developed through training and development so that they are better able to challenge leaders and hold them to even greater account for the achievement of pupils at the school.

I am copying this letter to the chair of the governing body and the chief executive officer, the director of education for the Diocese of Peterborough, the regional schools commissioner and the director of children's services for Northamptonshire. This letter will be published on the Ofsted website.

Yours sincerely

Emma Nuttall
Her Majesty's Inspector

Information about the inspection

During the inspection, meetings were held with you, senior leaders and representatives from the governing body, including a telephone conversation with the chair of the governing body. I also spoke with a representative from the trust. I spoke with parents before school and a group of pupils about their school experience. Jointly with the headteacher, I visited a range of classes and we sampled pupils' books. In addition, I scrutinised the school's safeguarding arrangements and records, including the single central register (the school's record of safeguarding recruitment checks on staff). I evaluated the school's documentation in relation to pupils' performance, improvement planning, attendance, and minutes of the governing body meetings. I took account of

the 105 responses to Parent View, Ofsted's online survey, and the 17 responses from parents to the Ofsted free-text service. There were no responses to Ofsted's online survey for staff or pupils to consider.