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Mr Andrew MacDonald
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Dear Mr MacDonald

Short inspection of Langham Primary School

Following my visit to the school on 20 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 October 2013.

This school continues to be good.

The leadership team has maintained the good quality of education in the school since the previous inspection. You and your staff have worked tirelessly to ensure that improvements have continued apace. The passion you and the governors feel for the school is evident in the positive culture that has been created. You demonstrate that every pupil at the school matters. This is shown in the way you warmly welcome children and parents at the school gate each morning. It is also evident by your conscientious approach to tracking each child's progress. Your attitude is mirrored by all staff, who take time to ensure that all pupils feel valued and that lessons are often inspiring and engaging.

Parents, pupils and staff are all supportive. A large proportion of parents completed the Ofsted online questionnaire, Parent View. All of them said they would recommend the school to another parent. Discussions with parents showed that a strength of the school is that each child is treated as an individual. Parents appreciate the tailored support plans for those who have special educational needs and/or disabilities, social or emotional needs, and for the most able pupils.

At the time of the previous inspection, the school was asked to improve the proportion of outstanding teaching and to accelerate pupils' progress in mathematics to match that in English. Good progress has been made in both areas. You have put in place an effective programme to support the development of high-quality teaching, which has resulted in excellent teaching in all classes.

Progress in mathematics has improved each year for the past three years. It is still not as strong as that in English, but progress in reading and writing is high.

Subject coordinators play a vital role in school life, with English and mathematics coordinators central to the success of the school. School improvement plans for reading, writing and mathematics show high expectations, a determination to continue improving and clearly measurable targets for outcomes.

Pupils make good progress in key stage 2. The standards they achieve by the end of Year 6 are above those achieved nationally in reading and writing and in line for mathematics. Progress in mathematics is improving, but there is still more work to be done before it is securely above the national average.

The proportion of pupils reaching the expected standard in reading and mathematics was close to the national average in key stage 1, with the proportion reaching greater depth above the national average in both areas. Similarly, the proportion of Year 1 pupils meeting the expected standard in the phonics screening check was close to the national average.

Children get a good start to school life in the Reception class. A well-organised classroom with stimulating activities encourages children to learn effectively. This is supported by an effective partnership with parents. The proportion of children who achieve a good level of development by the end of their first year is above the national average.

The curriculum is broad and balanced, and a range of opportunities are provided to extend pupils' learning. This is evidenced by the quality of robotics programming achieved by older pupils and, because a member of staff is a qualified coach, the excellent gymnastics standards achieved.

Safeguarding is effective.

You have ensured that there is a strong culture of safeguarding within the school. All staff have received and read the latest Department for Education guidance. Any concern about the safety of pupils is taken seriously and followed up quickly. Pupils say that there is always someone who will talk to them if they are worried. Governors are well trained and have a good understanding of their responsibilities. They make sure that all appointments follow the correct procedures. A safeguarding governor visits the school regularly. All parents who completed Parent View felt that their child was safe and happy at school.

Discussions with pupils show that they have a good understanding of equality and the different types of bullying. They look after each other in the playground and have a system of 'buddies' which pairs older children with the very youngest. Pupils know how to be safe online and have a good understanding of cyber bullying and what to do if it ever happens.

Inspection findings

- During the inspection I looked at the progress pupils make in mathematics during key stage 2, the quality of support provided for disadvantaged pupils, the progress made since the previous inspection and the standard of spelling within school.
- Progress in mathematics across the school is strong and improving. Mathematics is taught well and there is a clear plan to raise standards further. The school has developed a range of improvement strategies based on accurate self-evaluation, including detailed analysis of pupils' performance in the Year 6 national tests. These include supporting younger pupils to make more rapid progress at key stage 2, providing more opportunities for pupils to improve their calculation and algebra skills, and developing mathematics enrichment activities across the school. These are all having a positive effect. Mathematics teaching across the school is characterised by high expectations, good questioning of pupils and appropriate intervention to support pupils who need extra help. Worksheets are sometimes used too frequently, reducing the opportunities for pupils to think deeply. At times, tasks are not best matched to the ability level of pupils.
- The progress of disadvantaged pupils is excellent because good use is made of the pupil premium funding provided by the government. This money is used to provide additional one-to-one teaching by class teachers and provide additional support through extra groups taught outside the normal school day. The school is particularly effective at personalising additional support for each pupil. The impact of these actions means that, in the majority of cases, disadvantaged pupils' progress matches or exceeds that of others within the class.
- Progress since the previous inspection has been good. Standards in reading, writing and mathematics have all improved. In 2017, progress in reading by the end of key stage 2 was in the top 10% nationally and progress in writing was in the top 20%. Progress in mathematics still lags behind this exceptionally high level, but pupils' outcomes have improved in this area each year. The quality of teaching across the school has improved and is consistently good. An effective staff development programme supports the professional development of teachers and non-teaching staff. One example of this is the three-day training programme that the English subject leader attended, which resulted in planned improvements to the school's spelling programme.
- The school's high-quality self-evaluation identified that pupils in Year 6 are achieving higher in grammar and punctuation compared to spelling. As a result, the school took decisive action to raise the profile of spelling and to prioritise it in the school improvement plan.
- Strong leadership has ensured that the curriculum has been improved, pupils are given more opportunities to practise their spellings, teachers more frequently challenge spellings when marking pupils' books and 'word workshops' have been developed in all classes so that pupils think about spellings in a wide variety of contexts. All of these actions are having a positive impact on the current standard of spelling across the school.

- Progress in areas other than reading, writing and mathematics is harder to judge. Assessment systems in subjects such as art, history and geography are not sufficiently developed to accurately monitor pupils' progress and intervene to support pupils where necessary.

Next steps for the school

Leaders and those responsible for governance should ensure that:

- pupils' outcomes in mathematics are as strong as they are in reading and writing
- the work started on developing a system for assessing pupils' progress in foundation subjects such as technology is completed for all other subjects.

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

Yours sincerely

Duncan Ramsey
Ofsted Inspector

Information about the inspection

During the inspection, I held meetings with you, the English and mathematics subject leaders and two governors. I spoke with parents before the start of the school day. I spent time with all classes and you and I visited a number of classrooms together, discussing the teaching we saw and the quality of work in pupils' books. I talked to the pupils in class and spent time with them on the playground during lunchbreak and talked to them about their experiences of school.

I scrutinised a range of documentation, including the school's self-evaluation and improvement plans, policies, assessment records and other information available on the school website. In addition, I checked the school's safeguarding arrangements, including the school's records of recruitment checks on staff. I evaluated the 67 responses to Ofsted's online questionnaire, Parent View. I also considered six responses to the staff survey and 17 responses to a pupil survey.