

Dear Mrs Masters

Short inspection of The Grange School, Daventry

Following my visit to the school on 9 January 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 September 2013.

Based on the evidence gathered during this short inspection, I have identified some priorities for improvement which I advise the school to address. In light of these priorities, the school's next inspection will be a full section 5 inspection. **There is no change to the school's current overall effectiveness grade of good as a result of this inspection.**

Since the last inspection, there have been changes to the leadership of the school. You and the deputy headteacher took up your posts in September 2017, following a period of interim leadership. Since then you have quickly identified the school's areas for development and have put a comprehensive plan in place to bring about change. You have ensured that subject leaders have taken greater responsibility for their subjects. They are now playing a bigger role in making improvements.

Following the last inspection, leaders were asked to accelerate the rate of progress and raise achievement across the school, with a focus on boys and disadvantaged pupils. Since 2016, pupils have made slower progress and the proportion of pupils achieving at the expected standard in reading, writing and mathematics has fallen below the national average. Boys and disadvantaged pupils have also made slower progress and their attainment has fallen further behind that of other pupils. Information you shared with me indicates that standards are improving but recent changes have not yet made a full impact on pupils' progress.

Leaders were also asked to improve the quality of teaching across the school by checking that activities are well matched to different abilities, and that pupils are given opportunities to complete tasks independently. Teaching is currently undergoing a period of change. You are providing teaching staff with training and 2 development opportunities to develop their skills. Teachers are beginning to use the information they have about what pupils already know to plan for their different needs. However, this is not consistent throughout the school. At times, teachers do not provide pupils with enough opportunities to develop their skills. Sometimes, teachers set tasks that are too challenging. Some pupils do not understand what they have to do and miss out on what they should be learning.

Pupils are enthusiastic about the school. They said that there is always someone to talk to if they have a problem. Pupils feel confident that, if something is wrong, adults will help them to sort it out. A wide range of clubs are available for pupils, including fencing, drama, cooking, art and science clubs. Pupils are supportive of each other. They are kind and polite, opening doors for adults and visitors. Pupils willingly talk about their learning and are keen to show what they have learned.

Parents are very positive about the work of the school. Parents I spoke with said they felt well supported by the school. They said that, on the rare occasions they have had a concern, it had been dealt with quickly and effectively by staff. Parents feel that their children are happy and safe at school.

Staff feel well supported by the new leadership team. They feel that professional development is helping them to improve their practice, and to do their best for pupils. It is only recently that middle leaders have been given the opportunity to lead change and improvement in their subjects. They are keen to do the best they can and appreciate the opportunity they have to develop as leaders.

Governors are ambitious for the school and its pupils. They have been reflective about the recent fall in standards and have provided effective support to the new leadership team to raise standards. Governors understand that the school is undergoing a period of transition. They are taking an active role in monitoring the impact of these changes, providing the leadership team with challenge when required.

Safeguarding is effective.

You and the designated safeguarding leads have ensured that systems for keeping pupils safe are thorough and robust. Records are well maintained and any new referral is cross-referenced against previous incidents. As a result, you and the safeguarding team have a good understanding of individual cases and pupils' needs.

Throughout the school, the 'Blue Butterfly' motif is recognisable to pupils to identify someone they can talk to if they have a concern. Staff are fully aware of their responsibility to pass on any safeguarding concern. They know that, whatever the incident, no matter how small, it may contribute to a bigger picture about a pupil or family.

You and the safeguarding team are determined to find and provide support for families. You are quick to put support in place through the school or local agencies when cases do not meet the local authority's thresholds for involvement. When the 3 local authority is involved, you and the team are tenacious in following cases up and speaking out if you feel that support is lacking.

Inspection findings

You are encouraging teachers to think creatively about teaching and learning in their classes. Up until very recently, teachers did not use assessment information to carefully plan for pupils' needs. Because of this, pupils' needs were not always being met. There has been some improvement but tasks still can be too easy or too difficult for some pupils.

In mathematics, the new approach to teaching is still developing. It has not yet had time to have a full impact on pupils' progress. Teachers use resources to support the development of skills in key stage 1 and pupils use these well to support their learning. In some lessons, teachers extend and develop pupils' learning further. Sometimes, however, pupils wait to be directed by the teacher and learning slows. Presentation in mathematics books is poor. This sometimes leads to pupils making mistakes as their calculations are not clear.

You have implemented a new system to develop pupils' reading skills from September 2017. Staff encourage pupils to read a range of books and to challenge themselves to read increasingly harder texts. The school's assessment information shows that this approach is beginning to improve pupils' reading skills. Pupils are reading more frequently and more widely. The teaching of reading in lessons is sometimes limited, and does not always focus on developing pupils' comprehension skills.

The teaching of phonics is inconsistent. Teachers do not provide pupils with enough opportunities to practise new and familiar sounds and words. The introduction of new sounds is not always obvious to pupils. Teachers do not always give pupils enough opportunities to develop their understanding of new words.

Pupils present their work in learning journals. This approach means that pupils are able to make links between subjects, and use their English and mathematics skills in different subjects. Pupils' learning journals, however, showed that pupils are given few opportunities to write independently or to develop their

writing skills regularly. Pupils do not always show pride in their work and their learning journals are often poorly presented.

Staff in the early years have made significant improvements since September 2017. Early years leaders have restructured the curriculum and changed the way adults assess what children can do. As a result of these changes, staff identify children's next steps in learning. All staff then work together to provide interesting learning opportunities that match individual needs. Teachers now adapt activities to individuals, for example sending a child to complete a superhero mission that had been tailored to meet their needs. Some staff in the early years are new to their posts and to the early years. These staff are keen and participate actively, but they do not have sufficient understanding of the foundation stage curriculum to contribute fully to children's learning.

Next steps for the school Leaders and those responsible for governance should ensure that:

teachers use assessment information to plan for the needs of all pupils

teachers use consistent and systematic approaches to develop pupils' phonics skills

teachers have high expectations of pupils' presentation of their work

subject leaders develop their skills further in leading and checking improvements in their subjects

in the early years, all staff gain a good understanding of the foundation stage curriculum to enable them to develop children's learning fully.

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

Yours sincerely
Helen Williams
Her Majesty's Inspector

Information about the inspection

I met with you and the deputy headteacher. I held a meeting with three governors, including the chair of the governing body. I spoke with four middle leaders and the school's human resources manager. I met with seven pupils. You, the deputy headteacher and I observed learning taking place during the morning. This included lessons in phonics, English, science and mathematics. We also observed learning in the early years.

I scrutinised a selection of pupils' workbooks. I examined a range of the school's documentation, including its self-evaluation document, its improvement plan and documents relating to safeguarding. I considered the views of parents by speaking with some of them before school. I also analysed the 122 responses to Ofsted's online survey, Parent View. I considered the 35 responses to Ofsted's staff survey.