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Ms Sue Blyth
Headteacher
Alderman Payne Primary School
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Dear Ms Blyth

Short inspection of Alderman Payne Primary School

Following my visit to the school on 17 October 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 school was judged to be good in November 2012.

This school continues to be good.

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

You and your staff ensure that the school is vibrant and welcoming. Your high expectations are shared by everyone. Staff, governors and pupils are proud to be part of this small village school. During the inspection, activities relating to 'Fenland Week' developed pupils' knowledge about their locality.

You are ably supported by your assistant headteacher and other leaders. Together, you ensure that pupils make good personal and academic progress. The school's strategic plans set precise targets to improve provision, teaching and learning and pupils' outcomes. When required, you have used local authority support effectively.

Governors have an accurate and detailed view of what is working well and what could be developed further. They show dedication to their specific roles and responsibilities. They visit the school regularly and hold you and your leaders to account effectively for the progress that pupils make in all aspects of their education.

You have maintained the good standard of behaviour across the school since the previous inspection. Pupils show positive attitudes to learning and are respectful to and tolerant of one another. Pupils I spoke to stated that they enjoy coming to

school. They talked enthusiastically about reading in the new library bus and how the safe external slide from the top deck can be used in an emergency.

Responses to the online questionnaire, Parent View, varied, but most parents agreed that their children are safe and well looked after. Typical positive comments from parents included 'children make good progress and enjoy learning' and staff 'are always striving to do the best for all the children'. However, a few parents expressed concerns about the quality of leadership, behaviour, homework and the lack of communication. You and your governors recognise that there is work to be done to communicate more effectively with parents so that all understand the positive work of the school. Inspection evidence shows that the school's behaviour records contain few behavioural incidents. These are dealt with appropriately.

Vulnerable pupils, including disadvantaged pupils and those who have special educational needs and/or disabilities, are provided with timely support and well-considered activities that meet their social, behavioural and academic needs effectively. Since the previous inspection, you have developed the skills of leaders so that they can accurately check teaching, learning and the progress pupils make. The implementation of new teaching approaches in English and mathematics is refining teaching and learning which, in turn, is improving pupils' achievements across the school. Evidence from observations and pupils' books show that most pupils are making at least good progress in reading, writing and mathematics from their September starting points. You acknowledge that these new approaches need time to show sustained improvement for pupils' outcomes.

Safeguarding is effective.

You ensure that all staff and governors place the highest priority on keeping pupils safe and provide effective pastoral care for pupils. You have created a secure and caring environment in which pupils and staff feel valued. Adults work tirelessly to keep all pupils, including those who are vulnerable, safe from harm. Safeguarding policies and procedures meet statutory requirements. Documents and school records are fit for purpose and of a high quality.

Pupils feel safe in school and have a good understanding of how to keep safe, including when using the internet. Pupils value their friendships and the support they receive from staff members. They told me that there is no bullying within school but, if they have any concerns, they are confident adults will help them.

Leaders work consistently with parents to improve attendance, which is steadily rising. Unauthorised absence is not tolerated and, when required, fines are issued.

Inspection findings

- My first line of enquiry was to look at standards and teaching and learning in the early years and key stage 1. I wanted to see if the results in 2016 at the end of Reception and in the Year 1 phonics screening check had been sustained, and whether the low results at the end of Year 2 in 2016 had improved in 2017.

- The proportion of children who achieved a good level of development at the end of the Reception Year in 2017 was similar to that in 2016 and in line with that nationally. We saw the Reception children improving their skills through a range of exciting activities. Enthusiastically, children used their knowledge of letter sounds to read simple words to enhance their reading skills. Other children bought real vegetables, such as marrows, cauliflowers and leeks, at the class market. Adults' effective questioning improved children's counting skills and knowledge of locally grown produce. The Reception children are making good progress from their various September starting points.
- The teaching of phonics remains a strength of the school, with a high proportion of pupils reaching the expected standard in the Year 1 phonics screening check in 2016 and 2017. We observed pupils in Years 1 and 2 using their secure knowledge of phonics to support their spelling when writing about the Fire of London.
- You were disappointed with the outcomes in reading, writing and mathematics at the end of key stage 1 in 2016. Understanding the areas of expertise of your staff well, you swapped around the early years teacher and the key stage 1 teacher last year. This enabled both to teach to their strengths, improving teaching and learning in both key stages. Combined with more specific interventions for underachieving pupils, these changes ensured that the outcomes at the end of Year 2 rose significantly in 2017. Evidence of teaching and learning and work in books since September indicate that this improvement is sustainable.
- My second line of enquiry was how leaders are developing teaching and learning to improve current pupils' outcomes in key stage 2. This is because, in 2017, attainment and progress in reading, writing and mathematics were broadly in line with attainment and progress nationally.
- Through effective training and the sharing of best practice, you have developed leaders, teachers and teaching assistants so as to improve teaching and learning for all pupils. Leaders are able to support weaknesses in adults' skills effectively. They check the progress pupils make carefully to highlight any underachievement. Specific activities for these pupils, including disadvantaged pupils, are swiftly put into place to support pupils' learning.
- Leaders are implementing approaches to improve teaching and learning. The mathematics leader has ensured a greater focus on the rapid recall of multiplication facts to improve pupils' accuracy and pace in working out calculations. Adults are developing pupils' reasoning skills to deepen their understanding of mathematical concepts.
- The English leader has ensured that teachers and teaching assistants produce well-constructed sentences with a varied vocabulary to support improvement in pupils' writing. Building pupils' stamina at reading difficult books and the ensuing discussions about the meaning of the texts are developing pupils' inference and deduction skills and increasing their understanding of what they have read. I listened to some Year 6 pupils reading appropriate texts with fluency and understanding.

- Evidence from observations and looking in pupils' books show that the new teaching approaches in key stage 2 are enabling most pupils to make good progress from their September starting points. This forms a good basis for raising standards further at key stage 2. You and your leaders acknowledge that pupils have few opportunities currently to deepen their understanding by applying their reading, writing and mathematics skills in other subjects.
- My third line of enquiry was to investigate the effectiveness of leadership, which was an area to improve at the previous inspection. Evidence indicates that senior and subject leaders are knowledgeable about their roles of responsibility. They make accurate judgements about teaching and learning, supporting staff to improve their skills. Leaders accurately check teachers' assessments of pupils' progress, identifying those requiring targeted support. This rigorous monitoring informs the priorities and specific actions of the whole-school development plan and individual subject plans. The impact of these actions is checked by senior leaders and governors regularly to ensure improvements in teaching and pupils' outcomes. Leaders' actions, alongside an accurate school self-evaluation, are continually driving the school forward.

Next steps for the school

Leaders and those responsible for governance should ensure that:

- the recently introduced strategies which are improving teaching and learning in English and mathematics are built upon so that pupils' attainment and progress continue to improve across the school
- pupils are offered more opportunities to develop their English and mathematics skills across the curriculum to deepen their knowledge and understanding in these subjects
- they improve communication links with parents.

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

Yours sincerely

Julie Harrison
Ofsted Inspector

Information about the inspection

I met with you, other leaders, governors and a representative from the local authority. I listened to some Year 6 pupils read and spoke with a group of pupils.

I looked at a range of documentation, including information about the school's self-evaluation and plans for future improvement. I examined policies and procedures for the safeguarding of pupils, including the school's single central record of pre-employment checks.

I visited all classrooms to observe learning and scrutinised the work in pupils' books. The views of three staff and 26 parents who responded to Ofsted's online surveys were taken into account, as were parental views from the free-text service.