

7 December 2018

Mrs Kim Wakefield
Headteacher
Abbey Primary School
Stuart Avenue
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Mansfield
Nottinghamshire
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Dear Mrs Wakefield

Short inspection of Abbey Primary School

Following my visit to the school on 28 November 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 March 2015.

This school continues to be good.

The leadership team has maintained the good quality of education in the school since the last inspection. You have led the school through a period of significant change. The school has become a two-form entry school and has moved to a new school building. The staff team has grown in number and you have established a larger senior leadership team. This team is ambitious and seeks to provide a culture of learning that will enable pupils to aspire towards greater achievement. The staff team members are united behind this vision of wanting each child to become the best that they can be.

The Nursery class opened in May 2016. Leaders have created a supportive and nurturing environment that ensures that children get off to the best possible start in their school lives. They have established positive connections with families, including the Bumblebees 'stay and play' for younger children. The Nursery is now popular and well attended. The well-planned learning provides a strong foundation for their learning during their Reception Year.

Throughout this time of growth, leaders have established a sense of belonging. Pupils are part of house groups: Earth, Air, Water and Fire. They have worked with artists to create banners and mosaics to depict their houses and feel a strong sense of loyalty to them. Consequently, they are keen to earn house points for their team. All pupils are responsible for choosing their house captains and vice-captains, who are proud to represent their houses. These groups provide opportunities for pupils of different ages to work together and provide a family feel to the school.

Children are encouraged to take on positions of responsibility. These may be by helping members of staff or in being ambassadors for their class. They are keen to welcome visitors and speak with enthusiasm about their school. The school council members are proud of what they do to raise money for charities.

Leaders have established a listening culture in the school. Pupils that I spoke with and those who responded to the online survey all felt that they had someone to turn to if they were worried or concerned. 'Bubble Time' provides pupils with the opportunity to express their concerns and evaluate how urgently they think these need to be addressed. Other issues are discussed in regular circle times.

Staff are changing pupils' attitudes to learning by helping them to understand that they can achieve, but that mistakes may be made along the way. Pupils understand that the approach of 'I can't do it ...yet!' means that if they keep trying, eventually they will. They display positive attitudes to their learning. They are inspired by opportunities to find out about different careers and to visit universities. During this time of change, outcomes have improved for pupils as the school prepares them well for the next stage in their learning.

At the time of the previous inspection, you were asked to ensure that the most able pupils are challenged effectively in their learning. Pupils, including the most able, shape their writing well for a range of purposes. The most able pupils write fluently and at length. Leaders have made recent changes to the teaching of mathematics to build fluency and deepen pupils' understanding. Problem solving is now embedded throughout the mathematics curriculum. The most able pupils are challenged further to apply their knowledge and understanding in a range of contexts. The most able pupils work at pace and with increasing independence.

Leaders' self-evaluation is well informed. You understand what the school has done well and what it needs to do as it continues to improve. Leaders have identified that the teaching of reading is an area for development. The approach to the teaching of reading has changed and now comprehension skills are directly taught to the whole class. This new approach is at an early stage of development. However, some pupils are not yet applying what they are being taught to their individual reading. Pupils do not yet have sufficient opportunities to read widely across the curriculum in a way that builds their knowledge.

The curriculum promotes the arts with vigour. The school environment is vibrant with colourful displays that celebrate pupils' learning. During art lessons, pupils work carefully to colour match their paintings using watercolour. They understand the difference between the materials that the Ancient Egyptians used and the paints that they have. Pupils speak highly of the trips and visits that enhance their learning, including the progression of residential visits. They recognise that these add to their learning. However, the curriculum does not yet support all aspects of pupils' learning as strongly.

Safeguarding is effective.

Leaders have reviewed the safeguarding arrangements in place to ensure that they are fit for purpose. You have established clear procedures that are in place at the start and end of the day to make sure that pupils' well-being always comes first. Senior leaders are readily available to address any worries or concerns. You have ensured that there are effective systems of communication in place. This has meant that, as the school has grown, those with responsibility are all aware of key information.

Leaders are persistent in seeking support for vulnerable pupils. The leaders' decision to appoint an attendance officer demonstrates their resolve to make a difference to pupils' lives through ensuring that they are in school to learn.

There is a shared understanding that bullying is persistent and unkind. Staff plan activities to help pupils understand this well. Pupils that I spoke with felt that bullying rarely happened and when it did, it was dealt with effectively. Leaders keep careful records of how incidents are dealt with. They monitor pupils' feelings about this through questionnaires. As a result, pupils feel safe in school.

Pupils understand what cyber bullying is and their comments about this are spread around school with 'cyber-bullying superheroes.' They know what to do if someone sends them an unkind message. They know not to disclose any personal information to anyone else over the internet.

Inspection findings

- Leaders have high expectations of pupils' attendance. This includes children in early years. The attendance officer works closely with families, so that good patterns of school attendance are established and any problems can be quickly addressed. Punctuality has improved. Persistent absence, including that of disadvantaged pupils, has declined. Attendance remains above the national average and is a strength of the school.
- Provisional assessment information indicates that the proportions of pupils who attain the expected and higher standard by the end of key stage 2 in reading, writing and mathematics have increased. In writing, pupils' progress is well above average and in mathematics, progress is above average. Pupils make average progress in reading.
- Pupils have positive attitudes towards reading and enjoy visiting the library area. However, they do not always recognise when they do not understand what a word means. Not all pupils know how they could find this out. This impedes their fluency and comprehension, particularly of more challenging texts.
- Many children enter Nursery at levels lower than those seen typically in their age group. They quickly become independent learners. They listen carefully to staff and to each other. For example, they listen to the sounds that instruments make in the outside area. They count objects and recognise numerals. They have the opportunity to play and learn alongside children who are in their Reception Year.

As a result, transition between year groups is smooth. Children make strong gains in their learning. By the end of their Nursery Year, almost all children are close to or reach the standards expected for their age.

- Leaders have high expectations of all pupils, including disadvantaged pupils. They ensure that they receive teaching that is well matched to their next steps for learning. They have ensured that class teachers, teaching assistants and parents and carers are all part of planning how any gaps will be filled. The additional support that vulnerable pupils receive is effective. Because of this, disadvantaged pupils are making strong progress.
- Leaders have recognised that they now need to build pupils' skills in technology, science and computing. They have begun a programme of professional development and have created a curriculum to address this. This is beginning to have an impact on pupils' learning, but has not yet become fully embedded. Pupils do not yet have the opportunities to use these skills more widely in the curriculum.

Next steps for the school

Leaders and those responsible for governance should ensure that:

- pupils have the opportunity to read widely and deeply across a range of subjects to enhance their understanding of the world around them
- pupils recognise when they do not understand a word and have strategies to overcome this, so that they can fully understand a text
- the planning of the curriculum promotes opportunities for pupils to develop all areas of learning, including scientific and technical aspects.

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

Yours sincerely

Hazel Henson

Her Majesty's Inspector

Information about the inspection

I met with you and other leaders in the school. I spoke with a group of governors, including the chair and vice-chair of the governing body. I spoke with staff and considered their views on the online survey. I observed learning jointly with you and other senior leaders. I met with groups of pupils and considered their responses on the online survey. I scrutinised a selection of the pupils' workbooks with senior leaders. I examined a range of the school's documentation, including its self-evaluation document, improvement plan and documents related to safeguarding. I

considered the views of parents by speaking with them before school. I also analysed the 111 responses on Parent View, Ofsted's online survey.