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Mr Andrew Clarke
Headteacher
Spilsby Primary School
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Dear Mr Clarke

Short inspection of Spilsby 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 your predecessor school was judged to be good in March 2013.

This school continues to be good.

The leadership team has maintained the good quality of education in the school since the last inspection. During this time, there have been several changes of staff and changes to the leadership structure of the school. Since your appointment as headteacher in April 2016, you have created an effective team of leaders who have a good understanding of the school's strengths and areas to develop. Staff and leaders work effectively together to share best practice and improve the quality of teaching and learning.

The school is a very friendly and welcoming place to learn. Pupils are confident and behave well. They enjoy coming to school, get on well together and have positive attitudes to learning. The majority of parents and carers are extremely supportive of the school. They speak highly of the quality of education and the care their children receive. For example, a typical parental comment was, 'I am so grateful that my child is taught and looked after by such a talented and hardworking team of staff.'

Relationships between adults and pupils are good. Staff plan a rich variety of learning opportunities to inspire pupils to learn across different aspects of the curriculum. Pupils are respectful, pay close attention in lessons and are enthusiastic learners. For example, Year 6 pupils excitedly described to me how their frozen kingdom topic had enabled them to explore the properties of water. They then used their knowledge to investigate the reasons for the sinking of the Titanic and considered why so many of the lifeboats sank.

At the previous inspection of the predecessor school, leaders were asked to improve the achievement and increase the attendance of disadvantaged pupils. School leaders reviewed their strategy for the use of additional funding for disadvantaged pupils to ensure that it was used effectively to improve pupils' outcomes. Scrutiny of pupils' work across the school and in different subjects indicates that disadvantaged pupils are making similar progress to their in-school peers, and sometimes better. Leaders work closely with vulnerable families to ensure good attendance. Attendance, including that of disadvantaged pupils, is in line with national averages.

Leaders were also asked to improve achievement in writing. Pupils are enthusiastic writers. Through my scrutiny of pupils' books, I could see that teachers now provide pupils with ample opportunities to write across different subjects and to practise their skills when writing for different purposes. Nevertheless, pupils, particularly the most able, are not consistently challenged to do the very best they can because their spelling, punctuation and grammar skills are not as well developed as they could be.

Members of the Infinity Academy Trust and the local advisory board provide senior leaders with effective support and challenge. They visit school often, are knowledgeable, and regularly check the actions taken by leaders to secure improvements. They demonstrate a good understanding of the community which the school serves, and place high priority on ensuring the safety and well-being of all pupils and their families. Governors and trustees understand their responsibility for monitoring the use of additional funding, for example the pupil premium. They receive regular and detailed reports on the impact of this funding on pupils' progress and attainment.

Safeguarding is effective.

School leaders have created a strong culture of safeguarding within the school. They ensure that all safeguarding arrangements are fit for purpose. Staff and governors keep up to date with training. They know what to do to keep pupils safe. The appointment of a full-time family welfare officer, who is also a leader for safeguarding, ensures that the needs of vulnerable pupils are met swiftly and effectively. Leaders are tenacious and take decisive action to secure pupils' well-being.

Pupils are safe and happy in school. They say that incidents of bullying or poor behaviour are rare, but when they do occur staff deal with them fairly and promptly. Pupils feel well cared for by staff. When I asked a group of pupils to tell me what the best thing about their school was, they were unanimous that it was their teachers, because, typically, they said, 'they are friendly and make learning fun'.

The school's curriculum supports pupils' understanding of how to stay safe in different situations. For example, they are taught about how to keep themselves safe when crossing the road and when using social media, and to be aware of the

dangers from strangers. Pupils say they are confident to talk to adults in school if they have any concerns or worries.

Inspection findings

- School leaders have a good understanding of the school's effectiveness. They know the areas in need of improvement and are taking decisive actions to address them. They have accessed good-quality support through the Kyra teaching school alliance, to secure sustainable improvements to leadership and the quality of teaching and learning.
- Staff learn from and share best practice within the school and trust, as well as with several other schools. Leaders carry out frequent and focused monitoring of lessons to ensure that the quality of teaching and learning is good. They give teachers immediate feedback to improve the quality of their teaching where necessary. Leaders help teachers to deliver successful lessons, support their professional development and hold them to account for pupils' progress.
- Leaders have established successful improvements to the way mathematics is taught to improve the progress that pupils make by the end of key stage 2. Leaders identified that, due to staff changes, there was a lack of consistency in the way mathematics was taught across the school. For example, pupils' reasoning skills were not sufficiently well taught to enable them to have a deeper understanding. With the support of a specialist consultant, leaders introduced a new approach to the teaching of mathematics to develop pupils' problem-solving and reasoning skills more effectively. From my scrutiny of pupils' books, I could see that there is now a consistent approach to the teaching of mathematics across the school.
- Teachers plan regular opportunities for pupils to discuss and explain their methods for solving a variety of mathematical problems. They give pupils prompt feedback to improve their work and use effective questioning to encourage pupils to explain their learning. Current pupils across the school are making good progress in mathematics. However, there is further work to be done to ensure that the most able pupils are sufficiently challenged to deepen their understanding.
- School leaders have reviewed and improved the way phonics is taught. Previous strategies for the teaching of phonics did not meet the needs of pupils as well as they could. Leaders worked with colleagues from other schools to research the best approach to suit pupils at Spilsby school. Leaders have trained staff and purchased new resources to ensure that the teaching of phonics is effective. Teachers now closely check pupils' learning to make sure they make consistently strong progress. In 2018, the proportion of pupils who attained the expected standard increased. School information indicates that current pupils are making good progress in phonics.
- In recent years, leaders have successfully improved the quality of teaching of reading. Greater proportions of pupils are now attaining the expected standards at the end of key stage 1 and key stage 2. Leaders have identified the reasons why too few pupils attained the higher standard in 2018 and have adapted

teaching to address this weakness with current pupils. Pupils now have increased opportunities to infer from and discuss their understanding of different texts.

- Pupils make good progress in their writing. At the end of key stage 2 in 2018, however, pupils' progress in spelling, punctuation and grammar was not strong, and this impacted on the quality of their writing. Leaders have recently accessed training for staff through the Kyra teaching school alliance to improve the teaching of spelling, grammar and punctuation. Further actions, including focused daily lessons and the implementation of specific support to help pupils catch up, are in the early stages of development. The impact of these actions has not yet been precisely evaluated. Scrutiny of writing in pupils' books shows that teachers do not consistently reinforce high expectations for pupils' spelling, punctuation and grammar across different subjects. This also means that some teachers' expectations for what pupils can achieve in their writing are not as high as they could be.
- Work in some pupils' books is not always well presented. Leaders have not ensured that teachers have consistently high expectations for the standard of presentation of pupils' work across different subjects.

Next steps for the school

Leaders and those responsible for governance should ensure that:

- to improve pupils' writing skills, teachers implement and rigorously evaluate the actions put in place to develop pupils' spelling, punctuation and grammar
- the most able pupils are consistently stretched and challenged in their work so that a greater proportion of them achieve the higher standards by the end of key stage 2
- teachers insist on a high standard of presentation in all subjects.

I am copying this letter to the chair of the board of trustees and the chief executive officer of the multi-academy trust, the regional schools commissioner and the director of children's services for Lincolnshire. This letter will be published on the Ofsted website.

Yours sincerely

Stephanie Innes-Taylor
Her Majesty's Inspector

Information about the inspection

During the inspection, I met with you and the leaders for English, phonics and mathematics. I spoke with parents at the beginning of the school day and I met with a group of pupils. I met with three members of the local advisory board and the chair and vice-chair of the trust. I had a telephone conversation with a representative from the local authority.

You and I visited classrooms together. I looked at a range of pupils' work. We discussed the progress of different groups of pupils and the school's plans for improvement. I considered the 21 responses of parents to Ofsted's online survey, Parent View. There were no responses to the pupils' and staff surveys. I scrutinised evidence from a range of documents, including leaders' evaluation of the school's current performance, procedures and records for safeguarding and behaviour, information on how the pupil premium is spent, an analysis of attendance and minutes from meetings of the governing body. I observed pupils' behaviour in lessons and around the school.