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Ms Angela Jermy
Hethersett, Woodside Infant & Nursery School
Firs Road
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Norwich
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Dear Ms Jermy

No formal designation monitoring inspection of Hethersett, Woodside Infant & Nursery School

Following my visit to your school on 17 October 2017, I write on behalf of Her Majesty's Chief Inspector of Education, Children's Services and Skills to confirm the inspection findings.

This monitoring inspection was conducted under section 8 of the Education Act 2005 and in accordance with Ofsted's published procedures for inspecting schools with no formal designation. The inspection was carried out because Her Majesty's Chief Inspector was concerned about a decline in standards at the school.

Evidence

I scrutinised the single central record and other documents relating to safeguarding and child protection arrangements. I met with you, senior and middle leaders, teachers, support staff, groups of pupils, parents, the vice chair of the governing body, a parent governor and a representative of the local authority.

I also scrutinised your self-evaluation and the most recent school improvement development plan, attendance records and a sample of pupils' work. I carried out visits to lessons with you and your senior leaders. I took into account 71 responses from parents to Ofsted's online questionnaire, Parent View.

Having considered the evidence I am of the opinion that at this time:

Safeguarding is effective and standards are improving rapidly.

Context

There are 257 pupils on roll. The proportion of pupils from minority ethnic groups and those who speak English as an additional language is below average. The number of pupils entitled to free school meals is lower than that in similar schools nationally, although numbers have increased over the last year. There are small numbers of pupils who are identified as requiring school support for special educational needs and/or disabilities and a very small proportion are at the assessment stage for an education, health and care plan. There have been three headteachers since the previous inspection. The current headteacher was acting headteacher for two years and took up her role as substantive headteacher in November 2015. A number of staff have left or joined the school since the last inspection. A new assistant headteacher for key stage 1 was appointed in 2016. In the last year, the school has dealt with a number of bereavements within the school community.

Outcomes for pupils

In 2016, there was a decline in standards at the end of the early years foundation stage in communication, making relationships and, in disadvantaged children, in reading, writing, shape, space and measure. The proportion of disadvantaged pupils and those who have special educational needs and/or disabilities meeting the expected standard in the Year 1 phonics screening check declined. At the end of key stage 1, the percentage of girls achieving at greater depth in mathematics was below national levels and boys did not achieve well in writing. You and senior leaders have taken highly effective action to address these issues and, consequently, standards are rising rapidly. The school's own data shows considerable improvement in 2017.

Children join the nursery with around average ability in most of the areas of learning. The school has rightly identified that children need an additional focus on improving their communication skills and their ability to listen to each other and work well together. The daily small group discussion time enables all children to take turns and share their ideas. Adults encourage children to use full sentences and to explain what they mean. They also encourage children to ask questions. The children observed during the inspection have been in school for six weeks and are already confident speakers and good listeners as a result of this highly effective approach.

Adults in nursery and reception classes make daily, detailed observations of children in their key groups. They have found that this has enabled adults to quickly identify any children who are falling behind in their reading, writing or understanding of mathematics. The new curriculum approaches and carefully targeted interventions put in place last year resulted in much improved outcomes in 2017 in all the areas of learning.

The outcomes of the 2016 Year 1 phonics screening check are not an accurate reflection of the steady progress made by disadvantaged pupils. Most of this group have additional special educational needs. The special educational needs coordinator has ensured that these pupils have suitable and effective support to help them learn initial letter sounds. However, most of the group find it very difficult to blend sounds together to read simple words. I read with these children during the inspection and they are still at the early stages of learning to read fluently due to their special educational needs. It is clear from the record of books that they are reading that their rate of progress is appropriate for their stage of reading development.

You have recently introduced two new approaches to teaching writing and mathematics. The writing programme started in 2016 and has had a significant impact on improving boys' attitudes and their achievement in writing in the 2017 Year 2 assessments. One boy said, 'My favourite subject is literacy because I get to write stories and poems.' Our joint scrutiny of books and observations in lessons indicated that this new approach is working well. Boys are writing more in topics, for example in history, as well as in literacy lessons. The quality of the content and presentation in their books is also continuing to improve. The new mathematics programme has already had an impact on girls' confidence in learning mathematics. This is reflected in girls' much-improved outcomes in 2017. Our observations of girls' learning in lessons indicated that they have a go at new challenges enthusiastically. However, they are not always making a record in their books of how they work out the answers to calculations. This means that they cannot check whether their methods work or not.

Leadership and Management

Following your appointment as headteacher, you have built an exceptionally strong senior leadership team. Together, you have rigorously evaluated the strengths and weaknesses of the school and accurately identified next steps for school improvement. Consequently, staff understand precisely what the school priorities are and the purpose of, for example, the new curriculum programmes. Staff said that they have had thorough training in how to put the new approaches into practice and can see the positive impact on pupils' learning and achievement. Neither your written self-evaluation nor your school improvement development plan do justice to what is actually happening in school. You have already started to revise these documents.

Governors provide strong support and challenge to you and senior leaders. They know the school exceptionally well due to their frequent and carefully focused visits. As a result, they have first-hand knowledge of how the school works and can ask well-informed, challenging questions to check that funding, particularly additional funds provided by the government, is making an effective contribution to improving pupils' outcomes. Governors are aware that the school website does not give a clear

account of the impact of this additional funding. They have started to revise the format of these required reports.

Safeguarding is effective. All required processes and procedures are in place. You have strong systems to check that the most vulnerable children are safe. You are tenacious in checking that external agencies respond to your concerns in a timely way. You have had considerable success in improving attendance and reducing persistent absence. For example, in one case, a pupil's attendance improved from 65% to 98%.

Pupils feel safe because of the nurturing environment that you and the staff create for them. For example, playtimes are a delightful experience. All pupils play happily together or sit in small groups eating their snack or 'chill out' in the 'twiggle area'. There is good supervision because adults walk round and talk to groups of pupils and make sure that everyone has someone to play with.

Pupils love coming to school. When I asked pupils what they like best about school, one pupil replied, 'I like everything about this school. I can't choose what to say.' Pupils said that there is no bullying of any type. If a pupil is unkind or has a behaviour problem, staff sort this out quickly. Most parents are thrilled with the school, particularly the improvements in communication and standards over the last year. One parent said, 'This has always been a fantastic nurturing school, but now it's moved up a gear. I think my children are better prepared to move on to the junior school.' A small minority of parents raised concerns on Parent View, Ofsted's online questionnaire. No evidence to support these concerns was found during the inspection.

External support

You have received good support from the local authority's 'better to best' programme. This has helped you to accurately evaluate the strengths and weaknesses of the school.

Priorities for further improvement

- Ensure that the written self-evaluation and school improvement development plan reflects leaders' accurate view of the school and priorities for improvement.
- Ensure that teachers and pupils can check whether pupils' chosen mathematical methods work well.
- Ensure that the school website has a clear evaluation of the impact of additional government funding.

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

Yours sincerely

Julie Winyard

Her Majesty's Inspector