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8 July 2019

Mr Andrew Clark
Principal
Reynolds Primary Academy
Machray Place
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Dear Mr Clark

Short inspection of Reynolds Primary Academy

Following my visit to the school on 19 June 2019, 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 June 2015.

This school continues to be good.

The leadership team has maintained the good quality of education in the school since the previous inspection. With the support of the trust and the governors, you have successfully established a school which is friendly, caring and welcoming. At the time of the previous inspection, you were vice-principal. Since then, in September 2016, you have taken up the post of principal and appointed a new vice-principal. In September 2018, you appointed a new leader to take responsibility for pupils' reading and writing.

At the previous inspection, you were asked to address two areas for improvement. The first of these was to ensure that pupils were challenged more consistently in their learning. You have taken effective steps to ensure that this has been done. The second area you were asked to address was to narrow the gaps in achievement between disadvantaged pupils and non-disadvantaged pupils. While there is still more to be done, you have been effective in many of the actions you have taken to improve this area.

Following some disappointing outcomes at the end of key stage 2 in 2016/17, you took decisive action to bring about quick improvement. You introduced much more detailed and rigorous systems for checking pupils' progress in reading, writing and mathematics. To make sure that this had a positive effect on pupils' progress and attainment, however, you strongly linked the monitoring information to the quality of teaching. Through the use of 'provision maps', teachers' planning now takes into account pupils' information. As a result, teaching is much more closely aligned to what pupils need so that they can make strong progress from their starting points.

You also made important decisions about the leadership and teaching of reading. You introduced a single approach to the teaching of phonics, so that you now use a specific scheme across the school. To make sure that the scheme is taught correctly, you invested in training for your early years foundation stage and key stage 1 staff from appropriately qualified trainers. As a result, there is a consistent approach to the teaching of phonics. This means that pupils are taught to read using the same approach, irrespective of who is teaching them. Pupils' reading outcomes are much improved as a result. Further improvement could be achieved through even closer matching of books to pupils' reading skills, especially the least able key stage 1 pupils.

The leadership of reading is effective in making pupils' reading a priority across the school. Your system for checking pupils' progress is particularly geared towards spotting when pupils are at risk of falling behind in their reading skills. To catch these pupils before they start to struggle further with their reading, you have set up various reading intervention strategies. Mostly, pupils receive effective support through these interventions, although there is some variability in their effectiveness.

To further strengthen pupils' reading skills, you have overhauled the ways in which the teaching of reading is connected to pupils' writing. Across both key stages, there is a consistent approach to how books and extracts from books are used to challenge pupils in their reading and to stimulate engaging written responses. This is supporting the improvement in levels of challenge for pupils and improved outcomes in writing by the end of key stage 2.

You have prioritised pupils' attendance since the previous inspection. You have been tireless in your work to improve rates of pupils' attendance, drawing on the capacity of the trust and the local authority to help. Despite your relentless efforts, however, rates of pupils' attendance remain stubbornly below the national averages. You are battling a high frequency of parents and carers taking their children out of school during term time for unauthorised holidays. However, there are some encouraging signs of improvement to rates of attendance, especially for some of your pupils with persistent absence.

Safeguarding is effective.

You and your leadership team have ensured that all safeguarding arrangements are fit for purpose. The checks on the suitability of staff to work in the school are carried out by the trust. The required legal requirements are met. Together with the vice-principal, you make sure that staff have up-to-date safeguarding training and that this is regularly refreshed. Staff understand their responsibilities for keeping children safe, including what they must do should they be worried about any pupil or the conduct of any staff. Governors have a firm grasp of their responsibilities towards checking on your safeguarding processes and their effectiveness.

You have established an open, enquiring atmosphere around safeguarding so that you do not miss any opportunities for strengthening your practice. For example, you regularly survey all of your pupils and ask them about any worries they might be

having. This openness has led to changes in how you manage particular situations so that your systems are even stronger and under continual review.

As a result of your safeguarding practice and culture, all of the pupils I spoke to said that they feel safe in school. Parents and staff share this view.

Inspection findings

- The very large majority of the time, pupils are challenged at the right level. For example, teachers' questions are skilfully posed so that pupils are required to think more deeply in their answers. In their writing, teachers routinely set work which is challenging. Pupils' writing shows that they typically respond well to the challenge, such as the use of more complex sentence structures to express ideas with greater nuance. They make strong progress as a result.
- By the end of key stage 2 in 2017/18, disadvantaged pupils' progress in each of reading, writing and mathematics improved compared with the previous year. For pupils currently in school, the work in pupils' books over time indicates that disadvantaged pupils' progress and attainment in both key stages are improving across reading, writing and mathematics.
- Pupils' reading outcomes are improving strongly as a result of leaders' actions. At the end of key stage 2 in 2018, pupils' progress in reading improved from significantly below the national average in 2017 to in line with the national average. Pupils' attainment at the end of key stage 2 in 2018 improved from outcomes in 2017 by a substantial margin, as it did for disadvantaged pupils. This has been a three-year improving trend. Similarly, in the phonics screening test, there has been a strongly improving three-year trend, with the 2018 cohort attaining scores well above the national average.
- The teaching of phonics adheres to the school's chosen scheme with fidelity. Pupils in lessons can identify the sounds of English, as represented in letters, with confidence. Teachers are also effective in using this knowledge to help key stage 1 pupils identify and explain the use of word classes, such as nouns and adjectives.
- Teachers' records of pupils' reading are detailed, with clear diagnostic comments about where pupils are finding particular sounds and 'blends' of sounds tricky. Often, teachers use these diagnoses to match reading books to pupils' reading ability effectively. As a result, the most able pupils read with particular fluency and accurate comprehension, including books with language which is challenging. Sometimes, the least able pupils struggle with parts of the books they have been given, with some mismatch between their reading ability and a few words in their books.
- Interventions for pupils who need help with their reading are in place and delivered by teaching assistants. These sessions are typically successful in supporting pupils with their reading. There is some variability in the consistent effectiveness of such interventions, however, when the purpose behind the intervention lacks clarity or staff would benefit from further training.
- The biggest challenge to leaders' attempts to improve pupils' attendance is parents taking their children out of school during term time. During the previous

academic year, leaders have worked with the trust and local authority to issue 99 penalty notices; 18 attendance cases have been taken to court. Leaders have focused particularly on a targeted group of pupils with low attendance. As a result, the rate of persistent absence is currently well on track to be a substantial improvement on the rate of persistent absence during 2017/18.

Next steps for the school

Leaders and those responsible for governance should ensure that:

- pupils' reading books are always closely matched to their reading ability, especially the least able pupils in key stage 1
- further training is given to support those staff who are responsible for reading interventions, so that the quality is consistently high
- rates of pupils' attendance improve.

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

Yours sincerely

Steve Shaw
Her Majesty's Inspector

Information about the inspection

During this one-day inspection, I met several times with the principal and vice-principal. I also met members of the local governing body, including the chair of governors; teachers of Years 1, 2 and 3; the leader of the early years foundation stage and the leader for reading and writing. I met with the chief executive officer and deputy chief executive officer of the trust. I spoke with several parents as they dropped off their children at the start of the day.

I listened to children from Reception read, as well as pupils from Years 1, 2, 3 and 4. I spoke to the pupils about their feelings of safety while at school.

Accompanied by the principal, I visited classes across the school, with a particular focus on phonics and reading lessons. During these lesson visits, I spoke with pupils about what they were learning and looked in their books.

I considered a wide range of school documentation, including leaders' self-evaluation and plans for improvement; information about Reception children's and key stages 1 and 2 pupils' progress, especially their reading; records relating to

safeguarding and the checks carried out on adults who work in, or visit, the school; attendance information and numerous policies published on the school website.

I took into account the 27 responses to Ofsted's online questionnaire for parents, Parent View, along with 27 free-text responses from parents. I also considered the 26 responses to Ofsted's online questionnaire for staff.