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Mrs Louise McGeachie
Mrs Kim Kirchin
Headteachers
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Rowlett Road
Corby
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Dear Mrs McGeachie and Mrs Kirchin

Short inspection of Studfall Infant School and Nursery

Following my visit to the school on 7 November 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 October 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 have combined your joint expertise and skills highly effectively to engage all staff in a concerted drive to improve achievement for all pupils. You have been successful in developing the skills and talents of staff to build a leadership team that has been instrumental in moving the school forward since the last inspection.

You have ensured that governors are well informed. They use this information and their range of expertise well. They work closely with school leaders to monitor performance and challenge the school effectively to improve pupils' outcomes.

Leaders have had an ongoing focus on continually improving teaching since the last inspection. This has been particularly successful in the early years, which has progressed from being an area for improvement at the last inspection to being a strength of the school. This was evident when we visited Nursery and Reception classes. Children were avidly engaged in a range of interesting and purposeful learning, such as using sparkly fabrics to transform a climbing frame into their space ship to 'blast off' on an adventure. Their supporting adult was skilfully ensuring that this extended their imagination and language. Others were concentrating hard to sort out mixed-up cards to successfully decode, blend and proudly write words, such as 'shed' and 'hush'.

There has been some historic variability in outcomes in other year groups since the last inspection, particularly in 2016 for Year 1 phonics and Year 1 writing. You explained that there had been staffing disruptions and difficulties and that you had also identified the need to review approaches to changed national curriculum demands. You and other leaders were proactive in putting in place appropriate actions for improvement. This included an overhaul of approaches to the teaching of and provision for phonics, writing and mathematics. As a consequence, pupils' outcomes in 2017 improved considerably to be closer to national averages, which represented good progress from these pupils' low starting points when they started school. You have ensured that teachers have received effective training to ensure that the school's chosen approaches can be consistently implemented. You acknowledge that changes still need to be fully embedded.

The high collective commitment to get the best for pupils and families means that care and well-being are the bedrock of the school's work. This ethos is highly valued by parents, who recognise that 'even though the school is big, it has a lovely family feel'. Parents also recognise that staff go 'above and beyond' when vulnerable pupils need extra adjustments. This is clear in the personally tailored support for pupils in the designated specialist provision. Furthermore, learning mentors and a counsellor ensure highly responsive support to raise confidence and self-esteem for vulnerable pupils.

Pupils are proud of their school and said that they enjoy learning every day. For example, a pupil enthusiastically told me that 'my reading makes me smart'. Pupils are particularly respectful of diversity, and all feel included. They value opportunities such as the signing club, using their new outdoor stage for practising 'disco' skills, and trips, such as visiting a castle to support their class topic. Pupils cooperate happily together across all aspects of the school day. All staff are proud to be part of the school and set good examples.

Safeguarding is effective.

Staff have a clear understanding of their responsibilities to safeguard and ensure the welfare of pupils. You have ensured appropriate training for all staff. Staff are confident to report any concerns they have about children. Records are detailed, fit for purpose and of a high quality. When appropriate, you work closely and constructively with outside agencies.

Learning mentors and the counsellor help you to work sensitively with families. You ensure that you make timely referrals to outside agencies and are persistent in securing necessary help. The level of need in the school community is higher than the proportion of disadvantaged pupils on roll would suggest, as many families who are not eligible for additional support are still struggling to cope. Leaders provide support where they can, on a needs basis.

All parents spoken with, and a large majority of those who responded to the Ofsted online survey, agreed that their children are safe and happy, well taught and looked

after well. Pupils said that they feel safe and trust adults to act quickly to sort out any problems.

Inspection findings

- You have ensured, through appropriate training and well-understood policies, that staff across the school are consistent in their approaches. Leaders have purposefully been prescriptive in securing this consistency. We saw this in our visits to all classrooms, when talking with pupils and looking in their books. Teachers and pupils have positive relationships. Classrooms and learning areas are attractive and make best use of available space. Displays provide helpful prompts and guides that are consistently referred to by teachers.
- All adults teach phonics in a consistent way, accurately modelling sounds and using the same terminology. They develop pupils' letter formation and ability to persevere in writing at more length. All teachers consistently use the school's marking policy to quickly highlight errors, such as letter reversal, and to use their assessment of pupils' ability in order to group learners flexibly in sessions. Teachers expect pupils to form letters, spell words accurately and use their knowledge of grammar and punctuation correctly. Books and visits to lessons show that teachers use interesting texts, often linked to topics, as a stimulus to encourage pupils' purposeful writing.
- In mathematics, you have ensured that staff have a good understanding of what and how you want them to teach, such as ensuring the pupils have access to practical materials to support their understanding of concepts. Teachers consistently include in the tasks they set reasoning and problem solving at the right level of difficulty for different ability groups.
- Where teaching is strongest, pupils are expected to share and explain their ideas, prove their understanding or justify their choices. This rigour was not as evident in all classes.
- You have introduced robust systems for tracking pupils' progress to sharpen teachers' identification of pupils' learning needs. In the early years, for pupils supported through the specialist provision, and for the most able disadvantaged pupils, supporting adults are skilled in moving learning forward swiftly. However, in other classes, adults are not as quick to spot when pupils are unsure and are not as skilled in securing pupils' understanding.
- You have put a range of appropriate actions in place to address the issues regarding the poor attendance of disadvantaged pupils. You meet with families for whom there are concerns and put appropriate actions in place. You are able to account for the pupils who had weaker attendance. You carefully monitor pupils' attendance and ensure that parents are regularly informed about their child's attendance. Disadvantaged pupils' attendance has improved. Overall, attendance remains just below average. Leaders are committed to taking continued robust action to raise attendance further.

Next steps for the school

Leaders and those responsible for governance should ensure that:

- teachers across the school consistently deepen pupils' understanding and extend their thinking
- all adults are quick to spot when pupils are unsure and know how to help them to improve
- the range of effective approaches to improve teaching that have been put in place are fully embedded.

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

Yours sincerely

Mandy Wilding
Ofsted Inspector

Information about the inspection

During the inspection, I met with you, the joint headteachers of the infant and junior schools, and shared my key lines of enquiry. I also met with other leaders, including the deputy headteacher responsible for mathematics and for the provision for pupils who have special educational needs and/or disabilities, leader for the early years and the English leaders. I met with the chair of the governing body and other governors. I also spoke with a representative of the local authority. I visited lessons in all classes, accompanied by yourselves. We examined samples of pupils' work and talked with pupils to evaluate the quality of their learning. I listened to pupils read and spoke with a group of pupils. I observed pupils' behaviour around the school at breakfast club and breaktimes and during lessons.

In addition, I scrutinised a range of the school's documents, including those relating to pupils' progress, the school's improvement planning, its self-evaluation and documents relating to safeguarding. I spoke with 15 parents at the start of the school day and took account of the 51 responses to Parent View, Ofsted's online survey, and the 43 responses from parents to Ofsted's free-text service. I also considered the 41 responses to Ofsted's online staff survey. There were no responses from pupils to Ofsted's online survey to take into consideration.