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Mr Matt Coleman
Principal
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Dear Mr Coleman

Short inspection of Windmill Primary School

Following my visit to the school on 21 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. The school has undergone a number of changes since it was last inspected. As well as your appointment as principal, pupil numbers have increased significantly over the past three years and have almost doubled since the last inspection. There has also been a period of turbulence in relation to the multi-academy trust responsible for the governance of the school. In September 2018, the school joined the Nene Education Trust. There are early signs that this new relationship is positive, and that the school's successful track record will be sustained.

In response to these challenges, you have successfully established a strong, expanded leadership team. You work effectively alongside local governors and the trust to communicate and enact a clear and ambitious vision for the school and its pupils. The positive impact of your work is clear to see in pupils' outcomes by the end of key stage 2. Standards of attainment and rates of progress in reading, writing and mathematics have been consistently above the national averages, and improving, for the past three years.

Leaders and staff have successfully addressed the areas for improvement from the last inspection. For example, the current work in pupils' books and their rates of progress over time show that your work to improve pupils' writing has been effective. The approaches to the teaching of reading in key stage 2 have been equally effective. The previous issue with an imbalance of provision across the two

Reception classes has been resolved. As a result of increased pupil numbers, children are currently taught in two, parallel, Reception classes. The learning opportunities are consistent across both classes.

Pupils, parents, carers and staff speak highly of the school. In discussion, pupils told me that, 'Windmill is awesome because teachers are there for you and help you with your learning.' In their responses to Ofsted's online survey, Parent View, the vast majority of parents expressed positive views such as, 'I would not hesitate to recommend the school to other parents', describing the school as 'a friendly and caring environment where my children look forward to going to school every single day'. Staff say that they feel proud to work at the school.

You have embedded a strong culture across the school, in which your school values, and the positive behaviours for learning that you wish to see, are understood and widely evident. Pupils explained to me, with pride and enthusiasm, how the school values will help and guide them as they move on to the next stages in their education. In particular, pupils spoke about the importance of recognising mistakes in their work as something positive, saying, 'We really want to improve. We make mistakes, but we learn from them.'

In your plans for improvement, you are rightly focusing on early years and key stage 1. The proportion of children who achieve a good level of development by the end of the early years declined in 2018. During the inspection, I observed that children in the early years do not have enough opportunities to regularly develop and practise their early writing and mathematics skills. In key stage 1, evidence from pupils' mathematics books shows that the most able pupils are not moved on quickly enough to harder work that will really challenge their thinking and enhance their mathematical knowledge.

Safeguarding is effective.

The leadership team has ensured that all safeguarding arrangements are fit for purpose. Pupils, parents and staff agree that the school is safe. In discussion, pupils said, 'There are so many people we can trust.' They confirmed that bullying is rare and that if they have any worries, 'There is always a teacher around to have a word and a chat.'

Checks on staff suitability meet statutory requirements and safeguarding training is up to date, for staff and also for those responsible for governance.

You have strong systems in place for responding to any welfare concerns which may be raised. The records show clear actions which are followed through with persistence, to ensure that pupils are safe and well cared for. This includes regular and extensive partnership work with a range of outside agencies.

Inspection findings

- During the inspection, we agreed to focus attention on the quality of teaching

and provision in the early years and in key stage 1. During the inspection, I visited all classes with you or a member of your leadership team. We observed teaching and learning and looked at samples of pupils' work. This confirmed that the teaching of phonics across the early years and key stage 1 is strong. Adults support pupils effectively in the daily phonics sessions. Consequently, pupils are becoming confident and accurate readers who can apply their knowledge increasingly well in their writing and spelling.

- The evidence from work in pupils' English books shows that pupils in Years 1 and 2 can edit and improve their work successfully. They are developing stamina for writing longer sequences of sentences and their work is well presented.
- The evidence from work in pupils' mathematics books in key stage 1 shows that, too often, the most able pupils are not encouraged to move on quickly enough to harder work that will challenge their thinking. This was confirmed by observing learning in lessons.
- Children enter the early years at a stage of development that is often below that which is typical for their age. The Reception classes are well resourced, and children's physical development is effectively promoted through the wide range of high-quality equipment available in the outdoor area. However, the balance of adult-led and child-initiated activities does not enable children to develop knowledge and skills in writing and mathematics as quickly as it might. Staff do not use effective questioning often enough to ensure that children make rapid gains in learning.
- There have been significant changes in the arrangements for governance in recent years. From my meetings with the chair of the local governing body and with the chief executive officer of the Nene Education Trust, I concluded that all those responsible for governance are providing effective support and challenge for the school. There is strong capacity to ensure that the school continues to improve.

Next steps for the school

Leaders and those responsible for governance should ensure that:

- leaders and staff in the early years improve their questioning and provide more opportunities to promote children's development in writing and mathematics, so that a greater proportion reach a good level of development by the end of the Reception Year
- pupils in Years 1 and 2, particularly the most able, receive the appropriate degree of challenge in mathematics, so that a greater proportion attain at greater depth by the end of key stage 1.

I am copying this letter to the chair of the board of trustees and the chief executive officer of the Nene Education Trust, the regional schools commissioner and the director of children's services for Northamptonshire. This letter will be published on the Ofsted website.

Yours sincerely

Christine Watkins
Her Majesty's Inspector

Information about the inspection

During this inspection, I held a series of meetings with you and the leadership team. I met with the chair of the local governing body and the chief executive officer from the Nene Education Trust. I conducted a tour of the school with you and other leaders to look at pupils' learning. I spoke with pupils during a group discussion and informally during lessons. I examined pupils' work in their books. I considered the 62 responses to Ofsted's online survey, Parent View, and the responses to the staff and pupil surveys. I examined a wide range of documents including those relating to safeguarding, the school's analysis of pupils' current and past achievement, leaders' monitoring records, external reports about the school, minutes of meetings of the governing body, the school's self-evaluation summary and its plans for improvement.