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Sarah Dugdale
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Dear Mrs Dugdale

Short inspection of Long Buckby Infant School

Following my visit to the school on 14 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 on 20 February 2013.

This school continues to be good.

The leadership team has maintained the good quality of education in the school since the last inspection. The strengths identified in the last inspection have been maintained and you have put a number of initiatives in place to deal with the areas identified as needing improvement. Teachers now manage their time in lessons more effectively and this has resulted in pupils making faster progress. Improvements in the teaching of phonics are helping pupils with their reading. As a result of these and other improvements in the school, the pupils are now, in many instances, achieving assessment results higher and, in some instances, significantly higher than the national average.

Governors know the school's strengths and areas for development. They are committed to improving the school and spend a great deal of time fulfilling their responsibilities. They provide your team with challenge and support when appropriate. Governors are taking action to secure the long-term stability of the school.

Parents hold the school in very high regard. They speak positively about how you and the staff treat pupils as individuals and ensure that they make progress in all aspects of their learning. For example, a parent told me, 'My child has made phenomenal progress since starting at Long Buckby.' They also appreciate that you make yourself available by being in the playground before school every day. Families enjoy attending the weekly assemblies, which celebrate a broad range of

their children's achievements. All of the parents who completed questionnaires stated that they would recommend the school to other families.

The teachers have worked hard to build on the good classroom practice identified at the last inspection. During the inspection, I saw high levels of engagement with learning by pupils. I saw excellent behaviour in all classes. As children move around the school, they are polite and well mannered. When I talked with a group of Year 2 pupils, they told me many things that they like about the school, so much so that, for example, one pupil would like you to increase the school day as he feels that they 'have to go home too early'. Nevertheless, the proportion of pupils who achieve at the higher standard in assessments at the end of the Reception Year and in writing and mathematics at the end of Year 2 is not high enough.

The school takes part in a wide range of fund-raising activities, some as part of national events and others on a more personal level for charities with links to families at the school. You enjoy the benefits of the funds raised by parents and friends of the school. Money has been raised to improve the library and provide a kitchen for pupils to use for learning activities.

Your assemblies linked to characteristics such as tolerance and fairness help to develop the pupils' understanding of fundamental British values. The school celebrates a number of festivals from a range of cultures and religions. You use these celebrations to help the pupils learn about their own cultures and the cultures of others, including through your choice of visits and visitors to the school.

When pupils need to be absent from school for medical reasons, the staff work closely with the families to provide each pupil with schoolwork and to keep the families involved in the school. The school holds many events for families to attend connected with the pupils' learning and as social activities. These include 'Grandparents Day', when you even managed to include grandparents who are living abroad.

Safeguarding is effective.

The school has a strong safeguarding culture as a result of regular and systematic training and updates for all staff. All staff with whom I spoke are confident that they would recognise the signs of abuse and know the school's procedures for reporting concerns and dealing with disclosures.

The school's policy on how to deal with any safeguarding issue is clear. Staff who report concerns are kept informed about the steps taken and they know what to do if they do feel that their concerns have not been acted on.

The school's records show that prompt action has been taken to provide support for families who need help. Parents told me that they value the time which the

staff make available to them to discuss any issues that they have. They know that help will be provided.

The school keeps detailed records collected during the staff recruitment processes. All of the required checks on staff are completed. All staff are trained to the appropriate level for their role. The school has worked with a number of outside agencies, including healthcare services, to support pupils and to keep them safe.

Pupils know that they can share concerns with a trusted adult in school and that adults will help them to deal with any issues that they have. They are taught how to keep themselves safe in school and in the community. Pupils confidently discuss their safeguarding lessons. Parents stated that they feel Long Buckby Infants is a safe and caring school, where staff are committed to children's well-being.

Inspection findings

- School governors know the school well as a result of their systematic monitoring activities and analysis of the school's performance information. They spend time regularly in classrooms and know staff well.
- Governors hold the headteacher to account regarding standards of provision and pupils' achievements. They also provide support and practical help when it is needed. They have completed a governance skills audit and use this to improve their practice through training and recruitment.
- The chair of the governing body, who is a national leader of governance, provides very strong governance leadership.
- Governors are currently developing plans to join a multi-academy trust to secure the long-term growth and stability of the school.
- The headteacher and the leadership team complete a range of school self-evaluation activities and use this information to inform their school improvement plans.
- A number of new initiatives were introduced recently to improve practice, particularly in English, which have resulted in some significant improvements in pupils' achievements. For example, the introduction of a new letter formation and handwriting style has helped to improve pupils writing skills in all year groups.
- School leaders are continually seeking ways to improve the school, including seeking an audit by and consultancy advice from the local authority. The audit resulted in a number of initiatives, which helped to improve standards in pupils' writing in their most recent assessments.
- School leaders work closely with the local pre-school groups and the junior school in the same village, often sharing training and expertise with them. This includes sharing safeguarding protocols and procedures.
- Teaching is effective in all areas. Pupils' results, in the national assessments which pupils complete at the end of Year 2, have improved in all subjects.

- Improvements are particularly evident in the reading assessment results, in which a significantly larger proportion than average achieved the greater depth standard compared to pupils nationally.
- Teacher's expectations in the early years have increased, which has resulted in increased numbers of children achieving the levels expected for their age. The school has identified the need to ensure that more children exceed this standard.
- In some lessons, opportunities for providing additional challenge, for the most able pupils are missed. The teaching does not provide sufficient different work for the pupils that reflects their individual learning needs. This is resulting in too few pupils achieving at the higher standard in their writing and mathematics assessments.
- Teachers are continually seeking additional ways to develop further their practice. This has included a number of visits to schools in other countries to learn about their practice. Following one visit, the school has revised its use of technology in classrooms, which has resulted in improved skills for pupils.
- The school prides itself on its inclusivity. Parents of the pupils who have special educational needs (SEN) and/or disabilities feel that their children have been welcomed into the school. Staff have developed their knowledge and understanding about the SEN and/or disabilities that these pupils have. This has resulted in staff being better able to meet the pupils' needs.
- The school provides a broad and balanced curriculum with frequent opportunities for the pupils to use their learning in English and mathematics in other curriculum areas. Teachers frequently find ways to make learning link to real-life experiences. This has led to pupils being more excited about their lessons.
- The outdoor learning curriculum allows pupils to take calculated risks and to excel in a range of areas beyond the classroom environment. Pupils work independently and in small groups in the wooded areas at the school that they have helped to design and to plant. This has led to increased independence and higher self-esteem for pupils.
- Parents feel that their children receive an excellent education. They value the many ways in which they can be involved in the school, such as through attending assemblies, workshops and events.
- The school's behaviour records show no recorded incidents of bullying, discriminatory, or racist behaviour for many years. Pupils and the vast majority of parents state that incidents of unacceptable behaviour are extremely rare and that any incidents that do occur are dealt with quickly and effectively.
- Attendance at the school is good. When incidences of pupils being persistently absent occur, the school acts promptly to investigate. When the absence is due to hospitalisation, the school works closely with parents so that pupils do not miss learning.

- The school has used the primary school physical education and sport funding to provide increased opportunities for pupils to be active at playtimes and lunchtimes. A range of training for staff has also been provided by this funding.
- The pupils are provided with many opportunities to develop their spiritual, moral, social and cultural learning. Staff work hard to extend pupils' awareness of cultures beyond their own. For example, the school recently hosted a visit by teachers from Croatia. This has motivated the pupils to learn and increased the pupils' knowledge of that country.
- Fundraising events in school have supported families with children at the school who have significant health issues.

Next steps for the school

Leaders and those responsible for governance should ensure that:

- they increase the proportion of children who achieve at the higher standard in assessments at the end of the Reception Year
- they increase the proportion of pupils who achieve at the higher standard in writing and mathematics at the end of Year 2, by ensuring that the teaching provides the pupils with enough work that reflects their individual learning needs.

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

Jane Green
Ofsted Inspector

Information about the inspection

During the inspection, I met with you and we agreed the key lines of enquiry for the inspection. I also met with school governors, including the chair and vice-chair of the governing body and the governor with responsibility for safeguarding. I spoke with a representative from the local authority. I spoke with a group of parents before school and examined parental questionnaire responses and comments on Parent View, Ofsted's online survey. I met with a group of children from Year 2. I had a meeting with the deputy headteacher and the head of the early years.

You and I visited classrooms to see pupils learning. In addition, I scrutinised the school's safeguarding records and procedures and anonymised records of

safeguarding referrals. We discussed the school's evaluation of its work and action plans for further improvement. I looked at examples of current pupils' work while in the classrooms and when I met with pupils.