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Mr Harry Portrey  
Headteacher  
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Dear Mr Portrey

### **Short inspection of Delapre Primary School**

Following my visit to the school on 1 February 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 June 2014.

#### **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 secured some striking improvements in pupils' achievements. Last year, for example, pupils' attainment was well above the national average in reading, writing and mathematics. This was a huge improvement compared to the year before and reflects the excellent progress made by all groups of pupils during their time in key stage 2. Pupils made progress in both reading and in mathematics in line with the top 10% of pupils nationally. Attainment by the end of key stage 1 also rose last year in reading, writing and mathematics. This reflects the strong progress children make in key stage 1, often from lower than average starting points at the end of the Reception Year.

This improvement in pupils' attainment in national assessments is a result of strong and effective leadership, teaching which is consistently of high quality and an environment for learning which is calm, orderly and purposeful. Pupils' behaviour continues to be excellent. The pupils rise to your high expectations of how they should behave, and they beam with pride when they are praised for being kind or for working hard. In the lessons we visited, the pupils' thirst for knowledge and their strong work ethic made a striking contribution to their learning.

You continue to ensure that pupils benefit from a rich and exciting curriculum. Stimulating displays in classrooms and along the school corridors inspire pupils to do their best in geography and science, for example. They also reflect the school's highly effective work to promote pupils' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development. In a Year 6 classroom, pupils had devised statements for a display entitled 'What we believe'.

One wrote, 'Honesty is the most important thing in life.' Another wrote, 'Humans should not judge others by the colour of their skin.' The curriculum is enhanced by an excellent range of extra-curricular activities, with particularly strong provision for sport, music and the arts. You have made excellent use of the physical education (PE) and sport premium to increase pupils' participation and attainment in sport. Many pupils benefit from the instrumental lessons they receive and go on to play in the school orchestra or sing in the junior or senior choirs.

At the last inspection, you and your staff were asked to further improve the quality of pupils' writing in key stages 1 and 2. The changes you have made to the curriculum, coupled with teachers' sharper use of assessment, have made a real difference. Teachers' assessments of pupils' writing show how pupils' progress in writing has accelerated since the last inspection. Their attainment is often higher than is usually seen. Older pupils benefit from the increased opportunities they are given to write at length across a range of subjects. Creative and inspiring teaching motivates pupils to write with stamina, precision and imagination. For example, in a Year 6 lesson seen, pupils were captivated by images from the 1906 San Francisco earthquake they were shown as they prepared to draft powerful, descriptive sentences about the earthquake. Their imaginations had been fired by the role play at the start of the lesson, where the teacher played the part of a survivor from the earthquake. In Year 5 classes visited, the pupils were writing imaginatively and precisely, as they drafted their own versions of the myth of Perseus and the Gorgon's head, using a range of grammatical devices. A small group of lower-attaining Year 4 pupils were observed learning to write increasingly complex sentences, drawn from a book they were enjoying about the witch from the fairy tale 'Hansel and Gretel'.

You were also asked to improve the effectiveness of subject leaders in ensuring that different groups of pupils, and particularly lower-attaining pupils, made good progress in key stage 2. The much-improved use of assessment information in key stages 1 and 2 now provides all staff, including subject leaders, with very clear information about how well different groups of pupils are learning. This means that any pupils who fall behind are identified quickly. The highly skilled teachers and well-qualified teaching assistants then ensure that teaching is tailored to the individual pupils' specific needs. The improvement seen in the progress of all groups of pupils since the last inspection, including lower-attaining pupils, demonstrates clearly the positive impact of these changes.

You know, however, that the rate of improvement seen in key stages 1 and 2 since the last inspection has not been matched in the early years. While there are clear strengths to the quality of provision in the Reception classes, particularly in how well the children are nurtured and supported, not enough children, as might reasonably be expected, have reached a good level of development since the last inspection.

### **Safeguarding is effective.**

All the pupils I met with told me that they feel very safe in school. They said there is very little bullying and that their teachers deal with it quickly if ever it does occur. They told me how they can let adults know of any worries they have by speaking with them or by

using the 'worry monster' to post a message. The pupils also told me that if they are lonely at breaktime, they can stand by the 'friendship stop' where one of the playground buddies will help them to find friends with whom to play. They described how the family support worker is there to help them if they have problems at home. A very small minority of parents and carers told me they felt that class teachers did not always deal with bullying effectively enough. They also said, however, that the headteacher quickly and effectively deals with any bullying as soon as it is reported to him.

Leaders ensure that pupils are very well informed about how to stay safe. They know how to stay safe when using the internet, for example, and about road safety.

Staff do not hesitate to report any concerns about a pupil's well-being to the designated safeguarding leader, even when seemingly of a minor nature. All such referrals are carefully logged, so any patterns, which may raise concerns about a child's welfare, can be identified. Senior leaders are tenacious in pressing social services to take action if they judge that a child in difficult circumstances is not receiving the care and protection they need.

Recruitment procedures ensure that the appropriate checks are made on staff. At the start of the inspection, however, the single central record of staff did not record all of the checks made, as is required. This was remedied by the end of the inspection.

### **Inspection findings**

- To ascertain whether the school remains good, we agreed that I would pay particular attention to investigating children's achievements in the early years. We also agreed that I would investigate the quality of teaching in key stage 1, and particularly how well disadvantaged pupils were achieving in key stage 1.
- You and the school's governors know that children's achievement in the early years has not increased as quickly as it has in other areas of the school. The proportion of children reaching a good level of development by the end of the Reception Year has remained too low. This is because children have not achieved well enough in reading and writing. Their achievement in other areas of the curriculum, for example in communication and language, physical development and personal, social and emotional development, has been, and is, good.
- You and the dedicated team of the early years staff have been working to improve children's reading and writing, with the result that attainment in these specific areas of learning, while still too low, has risen each year since the last inspection. With external support, the team has strengthened the assessment of children's skills on their entry to the early years to help children get off to a more rapid start in the Reception class. A culture change is being brought about so that the strong focus on nurturing children is matched by higher expectations of what children can achieve in reading and writing. Children are being challenged increasingly well. One wrote, for example, 'The goat has a coat.' Plans are in place to quicken the staggered start to children's admittance into the school so that teachers can begin teaching reading and writing sooner.
- The greater consistency brought to the teaching of reading and writing in key stages 1 and 2 has not yet, however, been introduced in the early years. You recognise that this now needs to be done quickly, so that the rapid gains in pupils' reading and

writing in Year 1 are seen earlier in the children's schooling. Currently, the teachers in the Year 1 class have too much catching up to do to ensure that all groups of pupils meet age-related expectations in reading and writing.

- The quality of teaching in key stage 1 remains strong and continues to improve further. Hence, pupils' attainment continues to rise, though is not yet as high as it is by the end of key stage 2. Highly effective teaching in phonics in Year 1 especially, ensures that the proportion of pupils who meet the expected standard by the end of Year 1 is above average. Teachers sound out the letters being taught with precision and accuracy. They use assessment very precisely to identify pupils' misconceptions, for example by listening carefully to their pronunciation to ensure that their phonic knowledge is secure. Good links are made between reading and writing so that pupils quickly move on to write sentences which are phonetically plausible and increasingly complex. One higher-attaining pupil had written, with a good level of accuracy, 'My pet is a unicorn. She has wings and a horn. Her favourite food is strawberry grass and raspberry trees.'
- Last year, the attainment of disadvantaged pupils by the end of key stage 2 was much higher than for other pupils nationally. This was a result of their good progress overall and their outstanding progress in mathematics. Disadvantaged pupils attained less well by the end of key stage 1 compared to other pupils in school and nationally, however. The actions being taken to remedy this are proving to be very effective. In particular, the improved use of assessment to track pupils' progress means that staff are now intervening more quickly and precisely to help plug gaps in pupils' learning. The improved systems for monitoring attendance, and more rigorous approach to securing good attendance, mean far fewer disadvantaged pupils are regularly absent than before. The school's current assessment information, and my observations in lessons, provide clear evidence that the attainment of disadvantaged pupils in key stage 1 is rising quickly and particularly for pupils in Year 2.

### **Next steps for the school**

Leaders and those responsible for governance should ensure that:

- the proportion of children reaching a good level of development by the end of the Reception Year rises to be at least in line with the national average, by:
  - fully embedding the improvements made to the assessment of children's starting points so that all groups of children get off to a flying start in reading and writing
  - maintaining teachers' increased expectations of what children can achieve in reading and writing in the early years
  - extending into the early years the effective and consistent approach to the teaching of reading and writing seen in the main school
  - ensuring that governors continue to challenge leaders and staff about children's progress in reading and writing in the early years.

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

Daniel Burton  
**Her Majesty's Inspector**

### **Information about the inspection**

- During the inspection I met with you and other staff to discuss the school's progress since the last inspection. I also met with members of the governing body. I spoke with groups of parents at the start and end of the school day. I spoke with pupils informally during the day and held a meeting with a group of pupils in Years 4 and 6. I also spoke with a group of staff, including subject leaders, teachers and teaching assistants.
- I scrutinised a wide range of information, including policies and records related to safeguarding, the school's self-evaluation and improvement plan and its review of the pupil premium spending. I looked at assessment information for previous cohorts of pupils and those currently in the school. I considered the views of the 40 staff and 20 pupils who responded to the Ofsted questionnaire, as well as the 82 responses to Parent View, entered in the last 365 days.
- Together, we observed learning in all year groups in the school, though not in all classes.

