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Mrs Elizabeth Reynolds
Headteacher
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Dear Mrs Reynolds

Short inspection of Long Sutton CofE Primary School

Following my visit to the school on 27 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 December 2013

This school continues to be good.

The leadership team has maintained the good quality of education in the school since the last inspection. You provide strong and encouraging leadership which values the contribution of others. With good support from staff and the governing body, you have continued to lead the school in an open and collaborative way. You have successfully steered the school through a challenging period, which required reducing the number of classes from four to three. Staff morale is high. Governors also talk with pride about the school. They highlight 'a family environment where all associated with the school care about pupils and seek to do all they can to help them achieve well.' Everyone associated with the school rightly identifies the positive relationships between leaders, staff, parents and carers, and children, which help all children to make at least good progress.

Your ability to bring about further improvement as a united leadership team is secure and clearly evident in your positive response to the areas identified for improvement in the previous inspection. First, you have widened the curriculum to stimulate and extend pupils' ability to learn by finding things out for themselves. You have improved their commitment to learning. You have also significantly strengthened the ability of middle leaders to contribute to school improvement. A notable example is the way you have taken responsibility for the pre-school and how you have empowered early years leaders to collaborate in extending and enriching the learning experiences provided for the children.

Many parents made their views known in the online questionnaire. They were unanimous in recognising the high level of care and guidance that staff provide and were almost unanimous in recommending the school to others. The large majority were very positive about all other aspects of their children's education. Typical parents' comments included, 'I am very happy with the standard of education at the school' and 'it is a hidden gem and a credit to all involved'.

Safeguarding is effective.

The safeguarding culture in the school is strong. You and the governors include specific updates and reviews of safeguarding procedures in your reports and minutes of meetings. This ensures that all safeguarding arrangements and procedures are fit for purpose. All staff give high priority to keeping pupils safe. For example, you and your administrative staff complete all the required checks on staff to ensure their suitability to work with children.

Warm and supportive relationships between adults and pupils help pupils to feel secure at school. Pupils told me that they feel safe in school. One pupil, reflecting the views of others, said, 'Everyone at school goes out of their way to be friendly.' Pupils know how to stay safe. For example, they understand how to use computers safely and why it is important to tell parents and staff about any concerns. Parents are equally appreciative of the high-quality care provided by staff. This is typically evident in parents' comments such as, 'I feel happy and reassured as I know the school takes safeguarding very seriously.'

Inspection findings

- You have rightly identified the need to improve pupils' achievement in mathematics, especially their reasoning and problem-solving skills. You have implemented a new approach to the teaching of mastery in mathematics to deepen pupils' understanding and help them achieve higher standards.
- The coordinator of mathematics is playing a key and effective role in training staff. Her work alongside other teachers, especially in Year 1 and increasingly in Years 5 and 6, is beginning to bear fruit. School assessments show that pupils in Year 1 respond well to the teacher's emphasis on developing their understanding of mathematical terms. Pupils in Years 2, 3 and 4 are also talking and thinking more about the place value of number and the precise meanings of mathematical concepts such as equivalence. This learning is enabling them to make faster progress than previously.
- Teachers in all classes use assessments of the pupils' developing skills well to set suitably challenging work that requires pupils to think and explain their mathematical reasoning. Pupils in Years 5 and 6 are able to think more deeply about mathematics. For example, they now explain in writing how they set about solving problems. You rightly recognise that establishing a consistent and effective mastery approach to mathematics across the whole school is work in progress. Leaders also acknowledge that a small number of pupils still lack perseverance when deeper thinking is required, and this slows their progress.

- You and your leadership team have responded swiftly to improve children's understanding of phonics in early years classes and further raise outcomes in the Year 1 phonics screening checks. Your actions have been strengthened by the school's adoption of the pre-school to secure consistently effective teaching throughout the early years. Staff in pre-school and Reception classes keep high-quality records and assessments of children's work and progress. They use these diligently to sustain the children's successful learning and development.
- Staff in early years classes implement a consistent and robust approach to the teaching of phonics and the development of writing skills. This continues as pupils transfer into Years 1 and 2 and supports their good progress through the school. A similarly consistent and effective approach to developing pupils' reading skills continues in all classes. Pupils now benefit from more frequent opportunities to read and share books at school. With additional encouragement from the school, most parents now sustain the good development of pupils' reading skills at home.
- You work closely with governors to ensure that additional funding is used effectively to support disadvantaged pupils. This group of pupils is too small in number to make valid comparisons of their achievement with that of other pupils. Nevertheless, teachers monitor the progress of disadvantaged pupils accurately. This includes enlisting the support of parents in helping pupils achieve specific targets for improvement identified in 'Passports to Success'. Teachers make swift adjustments to the extra support provided in order for pupils' good progress to be sustained. Teachers take similar action to ensure that vulnerable pupils and those who have special educational needs and/or disabilities are supported to equally good effect.
- In recent years, you have improved the way teachers assess pupils' progress. You have also extended the skills and made good use of the expertise of middle leaders, such as the coordinator of special educational needs. These initiatives have helped you to support all groups of pupils more strongly. For example, pupils benefit from relevant work that challenges them at the right level, as well as benefiting from additional adult guidance in small groups or as individuals. The introduction of case studies to record the needs of vulnerable pupils now provides clear information about their starting points. Regular meetings between staff to discuss pupils' progress ensure the effectiveness of interventions to quicken their progress. Consequently, these pupils now make as good progress as their classmates.
- You are aware of the past variations in pupils' attendance. You have put strategies in place to reduce these, especially by monitoring and rigorously tackling persistent absence. Staff work closely with parents and outside agencies to examine the reasons for pupils' absence and to identify and support pupils who are at risk of low attendance. You ensure that additional funding is used effectively to boost the confidence and readiness to learn of some vulnerable pupils. For example, they are supported in attending breakfast and other school clubs and activities in order to improve their attendance and punctuality. As a result, the current rate of attendance matches that found nationally. The number

of pupils whose attendance is persistently low has been reduced. It is now very small and mostly related to health and welfare issues.

Next steps for the school

Leaders and those responsible for governance should ensure that:

- action to develop pupils' reasoning and problem-solving skills in mathematics continues to be taken in all classes so that pupils make the progress needed to help them reach their full potential by the time they leave the school
- work continues to monitor carefully the progress that disadvantaged pupils make, so that any underachievement is quickly addressed.

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

Yours sincerely

Alexander Baxter
Ofsted Inspector

Information about the inspection

During the inspection, I held meetings with you and consulted with the other staff who have leadership responsibilities. I met with governors of the school and visited classrooms with you. We collected and scrutinised samples of pupils' work in books. I talked with individual pupils during visits to classrooms and listened to you hearing pupils read and talking to them about their reading. I observed lunchtime arrangements and talked with pupils and support staff. In addition, I examined a range of documents relating to safeguarding, pupils' attendance, pupils' progress and the school's self-evaluation and development. I took account of 45 responses to the Ofsted online Parent View survey and 45 additional written comments from parents.