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Dear Mr Miller

Short inspection of Little Bowden School

Following my visit to the school on 12 June 2019, 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 second short inspection carried out since the school was judged to be good in December 2011.

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 is bright and welcoming and pupils state how they love coming to school because they feel supported and listened to by all members of staff. Pupils' attitudes towards learning are positive. They are polite and courteous around the school. Members of the school council speak passionately about the school's ethos of a 'route to resilience', which includes developing characteristics such as optimism, enthusiasm and self-efficacy. They say how this helps them to become independent learners. Pupils speak confidently about the way in which the school deals with any incidents of bullying or racism, although they are quick to state that these are very rare. When talking to pupils about keeping safe in school, they know they can speak to the Access to Learning Team if they feel sad or have an issue at home.

Pupils know what to do if there is a fire alarm. They are aware that the doors are locked and that only the staff have 'special keys' to get into school once the building has been evacuated.

Pupils learn Mandarin and say that they 'love these lessons'. They also take part in a wide range of curriculum activities, for example cooking and wake and shake, some of which are held before and after school. Pupils enjoy going on visits and the Year 5 pupils spoke enthusiastically about a recent visit to London and how excited they were to go on the London Eye.

As headteacher, you are well supported by governors and the deputy headteacher. Governors have a clear understanding of the school's priorities and how these are met through the school development plan. Governors are well placed to challenge you. They hold you and your subject leaders to account for the school's performance.

You, your deputy and the governors have a detailed and accurate view of how well the school is performing. At the previous inspection, you were asked to ensure that support and challenge for pupils did not rely too heavily on intervention sessions. During the learning walk with the deputy headteacher, I observed pupils in all year groups being supported and challenged in the classroom. For example, in Year 6, pupils were carrying out a research project using tablet computers. Skilled questioning by the teacher and other adults in the classroom encouraged pupils to think carefully about the information they had retrieved.

At the last inspection, you were asked to develop the leadership skills of subject leaders so that they were well placed to hold teachers to account for the progress pupils make. Subject leaders in mathematics and English have received training on analysing the performance of all pupils. A rigorous monitoring cycle is in place, which includes observation of teaching, looking in pupils' books, learning walks and talking to pupils about the progress they are making in lessons.

The English subject leader has supported teachers with the moderation of writing to ensure that expectations and standards are consistent in school. The mathematics subject leader has delivered staff training so that teachers know how to challenge the more able pupils. Subject leaders work closely with the governing body and attend the local multi-academy trust meetings to ensure that they are up to date with national and local initiatives so that they can provide further challenge to teachers.

You and your leaders scrutinise the data resulting from individual and small-group teaching of pupils who need extra support. In pupil progress meetings, you consider the impact this work is having on each pupil's progress in lessons. Teachers now make good use of this performance information to plan learning. Subject leaders use it well to hold teachers to account.

You recognise that some pupils require additional support. The school continues to place great importance on the well-being of the pupils through the pastoral team. You and your leaders regularly check if this is effective and support is reviewed each half term.

Safeguarding is effective.

The leadership team has ensured that all safeguarding arrangements are fit for purpose and fully meet requirements. Records are detailed and kept securely. Leaders and governors place high importance on safeguarding. Staff see safeguarding as everyone's responsibility. It is a standard agenda item for briefings

and clear systems are in place for you to communicate with staff. You provide all staff with relevant and regular training so that they know what to do if they have any concerns. A clear and thorough induction process is in place for all staff.

Pupils receive good guidance on how to keep safe. This includes advice about online safety and who to go to in the school grounds if they feel sad or upset. The school council said that bullying is not a problem in their school, but if there are any issues they are swiftly resolved.

Governors have a good understanding of safeguarding procedures and are rigorous in their approach. The chair of governors and the governor responsible for special educational needs and/or disabilities recently conducted a safeguarding audit and concluded that 'Safeguarding remains a critical element of the school's work.' External agencies, including the educational psychologist and school nurse, are appropriately involved in safeguarding issues where necessary.

An overwhelming majority of parents and carers agreed, through Ofsted's online survey, Parent View, that their children are safe in school.

Inspection findings

- The proportion of the pupils who reached the expected standard in the Year 1 phonics screening check has declined over the last three years. You and the governors have rightly identified this as an area for improvement in the strategic school development plan.
- You have increased the number of phonics sessions being taught and raised expectations of achievement in the early years. Additional resources have been purchased, including a range of picture books, so that children in the Reception class can access more books earlier. This initiative has increased parental engagement in their child's learning. Children in the Reception classes and pupils in Year 1 have more opportunities to apply their phonics skills to writing. This was evident in the Year 1 class I visited, where pupils were writing about animals in the zoo and sounding out letters before writing the words in their books. The pupils I heard read could confidently sound out unfamiliar words.
- You have improved the consistency of teaching by introducing a new literacy scheme in Reception and Year 1. Staff have attended training to improve their practice in the teaching of letters and sounds. Your current attainment information indicates that the proportion of pupils who are currently on track to meet the expected standard in the phonics screening check has increased this year. However, it is too early for leaders to be sure that the changes introduced will have the impact they intend and be sustained over time.
- The proportion of disadvantaged pupils across the school is lower than seen nationally. Current pupils benefit from good teaching and well-focused extra help when they need it. Leaders have rigorous systems in place to identify the needs of these pupils and address any gaps in their learning. You hold regular pupil progress meetings with your teachers, and they are now making good use of this data and explaining how they are going to support these pupils in the classroom.

You view these meetings as crucial in making decisions about where to allocate extra support for disadvantaged pupils.

- Timely actions to address the weaker progress made by disadvantaged pupils are in place and resources have been allocated accordingly. You use the pupil premium funding in a variety of ways to ensure that disadvantaged pupils make as much progress as possible. To improve their confidence, pupils attend Forest School and take part in visits out of school. Pupils are invited to attend breakfast club so they can have a calm start to the day and be ready to learn. Additional support is tracked and monitored, each half term, and reviewed to ensure that the needs of all pupils are being met.
- You and the governors are aware that disadvantaged pupils are not meeting the same standards as all pupils in school but projections for the end of key stage 2 are more positive and you are expecting a higher proportion of these pupils to meet the expected standard in 2019. You have reviewed your curriculum provision to ensure that as many opportunities are offered to all pupils, including those who are disadvantaged, so that standards will continue to improve.
- A rigorous and effective approach has been adopted by you and your senior leaders in the frequent and routine monitoring of attendance so that individuals are not missed. There is whole-school approach to maintaining low levels of absence. Attendance reports are now produced every half term and analysed thoroughly for any patterns of absence. Systems are in place to contact parents if pupils do not arrive in school. Support is provided by senior leaders if any parent has difficulty getting their child to school.
- An analysis of current information indicates that attendance to date is 97.1% and above last year's national average.

Next steps for the school

Leaders and those responsible for governance should ensure that:

- phonics teaching is consistently effective so that the proportion of pupils who achieve the expected standard in the phonics screening check, at the end of Year 1, is at least in line with the national average.
- wider curriculum opportunities are embedded so that all pupils are provided with the opportunity to draw on experiences from other areas of the curriculum, and standards continue to rise.

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

Yours sincerely

Karen Slack
Ofsted Inspector

Information about the inspection

During the inspection, I met with you and the deputy headteacher and shared my lines of enquiry. I also met with representatives from the school's governing body, the pastoral lead and the mathematics and English subject leaders. I met with members of staff, including the office manager. With the deputy headteacher, I jointly observed teaching and learning in classes and I examined samples of pupils' work during the observations. I listened to a sample of pupils in Year 1 read. I met with the school council to discuss behaviour, safeguarding and learning in school and spoke informally with pupils in their classes. I analysed documents, including plans for the school's improvement, published data and reports showing the school's view of its own performance. I held a telephone conversation with a representative from the local authority. I evaluated the school's website. Safeguarding documents, policies and records relating to attendance were also inspected. I took account of the 97 responses to Ofsted's online questionnaire, Parent View, and the 93 free-text comments. I also spoke to parents at the beginning of the day.