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Mrs Lisa Virnuls
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Dear Mrs Virnuls

Short inspection of Eileen Wade Lower School

Following my visit to the school on 19 May 2016, 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 January 2012.

This school continues to be good.

The leadership team has maintained the good quality of education in the school since the last inspection. After a short period of well-managed transition in the autumn term 2015, following the retirement of the previous headteacher, you adapted very quickly to your new role as headteacher of the Federation of Eileen Wade and Milton Ernest lower schools. You have high expectations and are determined to make this school outstanding as quickly as possible. You are rapidly developing your own style of leadership with particular strengths in:

- the excellent relationships you have with parents, staff and pupils
- the accurate evaluation of the school's strengths and areas for further improvement
- the effective monitoring of the quality of teaching and learning
- the sensitive approach you take to support families who need extra help.

With the high commitment of staff and governors, you are seeking to maintain the strengths of the school and make it even better. Teachers understand and apply the school's assessment and marking policy effectively. There are good examples of pupils improving their work as a result. You are taking prompt action to accelerate pupils' progress further in reading, writing and mathematics. You appreciate the support and challenge of governors and the local authority adviser. You are very open to their recommendations.

Current pupils are doing better in all classes and results this year are predicted to be higher than in 2015. Consolidation is required in writing so that standards are equally high across subjects of the curriculum and not just in English. The areas identified in need of further improvement at your previous Ofsted inspection are being addressed well. You are developing the role of subject leaders jointly with Milton Ernest Lower School to ensure that, even in this small school, all subjects are given equal importance so that pupils experience a vibrant curriculum. You are well placed to lead the challenges of the new-build programme as the school grows into a primary school from September 2017.

During my visit, I spoke with many parents and pupils. Pupils said consistently that they enjoy their learning and that teachers give them harder work when they think they can cope with it. The Year 4 pupils were confident to move on to their new middle school although sad to be missing out on the brand new classroom planned for future Years 5 and 6. Pupils listed many things that, in their opinion, make the school really good and friendly. They were enthusiastic about what they are learning in class. They enjoy art, physical education, mathematics and science. They like literacy especially when they are allowed to write their own stories. Homework reinforces what is learned at school and encourages pupils to apply their learning to different contexts.

Pupils explained clearly why bullying is not tolerated at their school. They know why the school's values are important. With the support of staff, you ensure the highest levels of care and welfare to promote the well-being of all pupils. Pupils' behaviour during the morning 'walking bus' is exemplary. The youngest children settle well in Reception. Routines are reinforced sensitively. In the other two classes, pupils are eager to learn because relationships are good. Teaching assistants make sure that pupils with additional needs are well supported in their learning and personal development.

Safeguarding is effective.

You ensure that safeguarding and child protection arrangements keep pupils safe. Staff and governors have relevant and up-to-date training. Pupils say that they feel safe when they are at school. They are confident to speak to their teacher if they are worried about anything. Pupils are also very clear about what to do to keep safe when using the internet and other social media. Bullying is not tolerated.

You are approachable and highly visible around the school. Records show that prompt action is taken following incidents. You deal with sensitive matters well and have established good links with external agencies to secure effective support for pupils. Your office staff check pupils' absence and lateness promptly.

Inspection findings

- The positive ethos and strong teamwork that you quickly established support your aim to make the school outstanding. Your leadership is particularly visible in the way you listen to pupils and families to meet their needs as best you can.

- Your development plan is fit for purpose. You use it well, with governors, to review progress made against your key priorities. Governors use their high level of expertise to hold the school to account. Minutes of meetings show that they offer support and do not shy away from robust challenge where it is needed.
- You use performance information well to improve outcomes and provision. You ensure that staff check their assessments so that work matches closely the ability and needs of individual pupils. You meet teachers to review pupils' progress, although decisions following these important meetings are not sufficiently clear.
- Almost all children are confident learners and reach a good level of development by the end of the Reception Year. Consequently, you are rightly aiming for outcomes to be above national expectations by the time pupils leave your school.
- Across key stages, pupils make good progress in speaking, reading and mathematics. In English, longer pieces of writing show that pupils seek to interest the reader, share opinions and convey their feelings using varied language and genres. The standards of writing that pupils achieve in subjects other than English are not as high, especially for able writers. This is often because in geography and science, for example, worksheets only demand short answers and this limits pupils' ability to explain, in more detail, their investigations and conclusions.
- Pupils' confidence and their moral, spiritual and social development are particular strengths. Pupils respond very positively to the high expectations for conduct around the school and for learning in class. Bullying is rare and taken very seriously. Pupils want to attend school. They are very keen to take on responsibilities, for example through the school council. Pupils want to make the school even better and they are clear about how to achieve this. They think that it would be good to study drama and to make a few subjects even more interesting. They also think that the suggestion box should be used more.
- As a new headteacher, you are learning quickly from belonging to local networks. You are working well with your mentor, are very open to advice, and encourage staff to work alongside each other and staff from other schools. Teachers share good practice to implement the new curriculum effectively. They moderate their assessments with other schools to gain an accurate view of pupils' achievement.

Next steps for the school

Leaders and those responsible for governance should ensure that:

- staff check that pupils' writing is of a high standard across subjects
- actions agreed at pupils' progress meetings are clearly identified so that teachers know exactly what they need to do to improve outcomes for each pupil.

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

Yours sincerely

Marianick Ellender-Gelé
Her Majesty's Inspector

Information about the inspection

During the inspection, I met with you, the three class teachers and a local authority representative. I spoke with governors including the chair of the governing body. I joined the 'walking bus' and met parents before the school day. I visited the three classes and checked your evaluation of the quality of teaching and learning. I looked at pupils' work and spoke to them about their learning. I analysed recent assessment information about pupils' progress. I reviewed procedures for keeping pupils safe and checked attendance records. I considered the views of 20 parents from Ofsted's online questionnaire, Parent View, and took account of 13 additional comments from parents. I analysed questionnaire responses from four members of staff.