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Mr Richard Burbage
Headteacher
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Dear Mr Burbage

Short inspection of Loddon Infant and Nursery School

Following my visit to the school on 24 January 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 at its first short inspection in December 2015.

This school continues to be good.

The leadership team has maintained the good quality of education in the school since the previous inspection. You, your senior leaders and governors know the school well. You have high expectations of what can be achieved within the school and across the federation. You reflect on what works well and what could be better and put carefully considered strategies in place to achieve your objectives. As a result, you continue to build successfully on the strengths of the school and to address areas for development as they arise.

You and your leadership team work effectively together to provide good leadership to the staff team. You demonstrate a resolute commitment to raising standards in the school and are well supported by the senior leaders across the federation. As a team, you have a sound knowledge of your school's strengths and areas for development. Since the previous inspection, the school has benefited from your decision to have both schools within the federation work closely together. As a result, pupils and staff within the school reap the rewards of working within a strong and robust primary federation.

Pupils are very happy at your school. During the inspection, the pupils were clearly engaged in and enjoying their learning. For example, in a Year 1 class, pupils were absorbed in observing blocks of ice melt. Their observations and explanations were detailed and accurate. Pupils spoke confidently about their learning and were very keen to share their work because they were extremely proud of it.

Staff are highly supportive of you. All who responded to Ofsted's online survey, Parent View, say that they enjoy working at the school and are proud to do so. Parents and carers are overwhelmingly positive about your leadership and the quality of education provided by the school for their children. They are particularly appreciative of the start that you and your team ensure their children make within early years.

You and your staff have worked to meet the recommendations from the previous inspection in December 2015. You have ensured that more children reach a good level of development by the end of early years. This has been achieved by developing a strong setting and involving parents throughout their child's journey. You have correctly identified speech and language and writing as areas that need targeting. Work has begun to address these issues further, but is at an early stage. Therefore, the impact of this work has yet to be fully seen.

Attendance of pupils is rising and is now in line with the national average. Analysis of your attendance monitoring shows that attendance is higher than at the same stage in recent years. The percentage of pupils who are persistently absent has also significantly decreased. Your appointment of the parent support worker and the federation's child and family welfare team have played a key role in these improvements.

Strong teaching across the school means that increasing proportions of pupils make good progress. This is because assessments are accurate and teachers know their pupils well. Pupils know their next steps in learning as a result of feedback that is timely and accurate. You have also ensured that pupils have a good understanding of how others live through the carefully planned, themed learning opportunities in both religious education and the wider curriculum.

All of the school's work has been shared comprehensively with the governing body. Governors monitor priorities in the school's development plan and are actively involved in checking the progress that is being made. Governors play a key role in the development of the school and the federation. Consequently, they provide an effective balance of challenge and support.

Pupils' behaviour is good at all times. In class, they show positive attitudes to learning. They are confident, articulate and keen to be involved in their learning. They are enthusiastic when responding to questions and clearly enjoy using the range of mathematical apparatus that is available to support the development of their understanding of new mathematical concepts.

Safeguarding is effective.

You maintain clear and easy-to-follow records of concerns about pupils' well-being. You follow these up with staff and with external agencies as appropriate, taking timely actions to ensure that pupils are kept safe. You ensure that staff have regular training and that they receive updates on changes to safeguarding practices. You and your deputy, as designated senior leaders for safeguarding,

take effective steps to keep your own understanding up to date.

Pupils are taught to keep safe through personal, social and health education, assemblies and discussions in class. Pupils I spoke with told me how they are taught to keep safe online. They said that there are not many incidents of unkindness but that, if they were to happen, adults would deal with them well. One pupil told me, 'There is no excuse to be unkind.'

Inspection findings

- My first line of enquiry to establish whether the school remains good was to determine how well the most able pupils are achieving. Published outcomes in 2018 show that an above-average proportion of pupils with high prior attainment reached the higher standards in reading and mathematics, and greater depth in writing. Analysis of workbooks shows that current pupils are also making strong progress. Within writing, the most able pupils' work is accurate, well presented and completed to very high standard.
- Leaders have placed a strong emphasis on the most able pupils to ensure that outcomes have been positive in recent years. However, pupils with middle prior attainment are not consistently being challenged to attain higher than expected standards.
- My second line of enquiry centred on the school's curriculum. Since your appointment in January 2017, the curriculum has become a strength of the school. This has been achieved by leaders across the federation working in curriculum teams to plan a curriculum that teaches skills to benefit pupils as they build up over time. You and your leaders have a clear rationale for the curriculum, stating that you wish pupils not only to develop key skills, but also a love for learning. Your curriculum is achieving this aim. Pupils told me that they enjoy learning new topics and they look forward to finding out what their new topic will be. However, assessment systems are not yet fully embedded. Consequently, teachers do not routinely plan lessons that enable pupils to make strong progress in subjects other than English and mathematics.
- Children in the Nursery and Reception classes start school with skills that are below what is typical. This is especially so within the areas of speech and language and writing. However, by the end of early years, children's progress is positive and the proportion of children gaining a good level of development increased in 2018 to be in line with the national average.
- Children in early years achieve well in the organised environment, where teachers plan activities that meet their needs. From the beginning of the school's relationship with parents and carers, staff plan opportunities for parents to work with the school to support their children's learning. Parents view this very positively, with one commenting, 'My child loves learning and can't wait to do his homework, loves bug club and recently enjoyed telling me all about different types of penguins and where in the world they live. It is a joy to hear such pleasure from learning!'
- My final line of enquiry looked at the work leaders are doing to increase the

percentage of pupils reaching age-related expectations within writing and mathematics. Teachers use assessment information to plan lessons that build on previous skills that have been taught. Leaders and teachers identify gaps in pupils' learning, which are acted upon by intervention programmes. New reading initiatives that require pupils to analyse a text in great detail are ensuring that reading outcomes continue to improve. Analysis of pupils' workbooks shows that pupils are making positive progress from their different starting points in writing and mathematics too.

Next steps for the school

Leaders and those responsible for governance should ensure that:

- a greater proportion of pupils with prior middle attainment reach the higher standard in mathematics and greater depth in writing
- assessments for subjects other than English and mathematics are developed further, so that progress can be monitored and teachers can plan more effectively
- children within early years receive a curriculum that immerses them in language in order for more of them to reach a good level of development.

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

Yours sincerely

Joseph Figg
Ofsted Inspector

Information about the inspection

During the inspection, I spoke with you and your senior leadership team and members of the school's governing body. I spoke to a group of pupils and individual pupils around the school. We made visits to lessons to observe pupils' learning and conducted several learning walks around the school. We also looked at pupils' books across a range of ages and abilities. I scrutinised a range of documentary evidence, which included the school's self-evaluation, the school development plan and pupil attendance information. I evaluated safeguarding referrals and child protection records, including the single central record. I also looked at the school's website. In addition, I took account of 31 responses to the Parent View online survey, 15 free-text comments from parents and 14 responses from the staff questionnaire.