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Mrs Lisa Farrow
Headteacher
Essendine Primary School
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Dear Mrs Farrow

Short inspection of Essendine Primary School

Following my visit to the school on 29 November 2017, 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 February 2013.

This school continues to be good.

The leadership team has maintained the good quality of education in the school since the previous inspection. Governors have secured a strong leadership team and a team of staff who are committed to improving pupils' outcomes. Leaders are clear about how this can be achieved, by ensuring that good-quality teaching is a strength of the school. Effective support and training are provided to ensure that teachers can develop. Leaders are not afraid to tackle underperformance. Outcomes for pupils have been positive since the last inspection, and leaders have responded well to the action points. Pupils, however, do not yet make outstanding progress in all subjects.

In 2017, pupils' progress in mathematics was significantly higher than national expectations at the end of key stage 2. Leaders and governors have ensured that additional teaching staff are available to provide focused support for those pupils who need it. As a result, work in pupils' books shows positive progress over time. Although, overall, pupils make good progress, occasionally activities are not sufficiently challenging, especially for the most able, to enable pupils to achieve their best in mathematics.

You know the school well and accurately evaluate its strengths and points for development. Governors provide effective support and challenge and work closely with you to ensure that the school continues to improve. Inspectors explored the implementation of policy in school, due to a concern raised. Policies are clear with reference to handling complaints. Behaviour management is effective and forms a significant aspect of the induction process for new staff. Pupils' behaviour is a

strength of the school. Pupils are polite and well mannered and respond well to your high expectations. They have a good understanding of the behaviour policy and said that pupils always behave well. This was evident during the inspection. Pupils approach their learning positively and show respect for one another.

Safeguarding is effective.

Leaders have ensured that safeguarding arrangements are fit for purpose. Records show that leaders work effectively with external agencies, and contributions to meetings include the views of pupils and parents. Swift and effective support for pupils is provided at the earliest opportunity. Intervention is offered in school through a daily session called 'the hub'. This is for pupils who are in need of additional support as their circumstances make them vulnerable. Referrals to early help and social care are handled in a timely manner.

The designated safeguarding leader has a high profile in school and in the playground. Pupils know that they can speak with him at any time. They reported that, in addition to support from staff, if they need help they can talk to designated pupils on the playground. These pupils are known as 'peer mediators' and support other pupils to solve issues. Pupils said that they enjoy their time in school and this is reflected in the fact that all groups of pupils attend school well. The large majority of parents said that their children are safe in school. Pupils have a good understanding of how to use the internet safely. Pupils feel safe and secure both in and away from school.

Staff and governors have received appropriate training, including on the 'Prevent' duty. Staff are aware of how to respond to concerns and know how to recognise the signs and symptoms of abuse. Minor administrative shortcomings identified in the single central record were rectified immediately.

Inspection findings

- At the start of the inspection, we agreed three areas of focus. The first of these was to look at the reasons for pupils' positive progress in mathematics. Progress in mathematics for key stage 2 pupils has remained significantly high for the last three years.
- Pupils display positive attitudes to their learning. They are keen to contribute and support one another well. Pupils use appropriate vocabulary to talk about their learning. Pupils use prior knowledge and skills effectively to tackle word problems and are confident when choosing which mathematical strategy to use.
- Teachers use assessments to identify gaps in learning for pupils. This information is then used to plan targeted work for these to be addressed. In most cases, additional support for pupils is effective. Overall, pupils' performance in mathematics is strong. Nevertheless, there are times when misconceptions are not addressed swiftly enough. Furthermore, teachers do not always plan sufficiently challenging activities to help the most able pupils achieve their best.
- Our second focus was to explore how the most able pupils, including those who

are disadvantaged, are progressing in reading. This is because, in 2017, progress in reading for this group was lower than in other subjects. Progress for the most able was also an area for improvement in the previous inspection report. You and the leadership team correctly identified reading as a key area for development and have swiftly implemented new initiatives.

- Your rationale behind the new whole-class approach to reading is to provide all pupils with access to high-quality texts, regardless of their reading ability. Pupils enjoy the challenge of discussing and debating what they are reading, and this helps them to develop their confidence in understanding the text. Lower-ability pupils are not fully able to decode or understand the vocabulary in the text; however, they contribute fully to discussions and enjoy the challenge. Behaviour during these sessions is excellent.
- Pupils respond well to the teachers' strong subject knowledge. For example, one teacher carefully explained a system for inferring information from the text through the process of elimination. Pupils responded quickly to this strategy, offering ideas of their own. Pupils were quick to find evidence from the text to support their answers. In addition to this, pupils are expected to use adventurous vocabulary when discussing the text. This is consistently effective.
- Pupils talked about their enjoyment of reading and they like the buddy reading system, whereby they have the opportunity to read with younger pupils. Pupils are clear about the expectation that they read regularly at home, and this is evident in reading diaries. Pupils are expected to read aloud on a daily basis, with emphasis given to the use of punctuation to improve their storytelling skills. The majority of pupils who read to inspectors demonstrated strong word recognition and developing comprehension skills. However, pupils do not always choose books that are sufficiently challenging. The new system was introduced this term and it is too early to measure the impact on the progress of the most able pupils.
- The final focus for the inspection was to explore how disadvantaged children are supported to make good progress in the early years. This is because, historically, this group has not performed in line with national expectations.
- The gap between disadvantaged children and their peers has now diminished. Outcomes for this group over the past three years have continued to improve. In 2017, just over three quarters of disadvantaged pupils achieved a good level of development. This is above national expectations for all children. Disadvantaged children are well supported and access learning well in early years. Case studies demonstrate the good progress made by children since starting school at the age of two.
- Leaders are quite rightly proud of the achievements in early years and are held in high esteem by the local authority. The stimulating environment offers a variety of activities, and some children are purposefully engaged showing good levels of concentration. There are, however, examples of children not accessing activities, leading to silly behaviour incidents. Lack of challenge during focused mathematics sessions restricts the progress of the most able children.

Next steps for the school

Leaders and those responsible for governance should ensure that:

- pupils continue to make good progress in mathematics through addressing misconceptions swiftly and providing challenge for the most able, including in early years
- the new approach to reading is firmly established to enable pupils of all abilities to make good progress.

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

Yours sincerely

Donna Chambers
Her Majesty's Inspector

Information about the inspection

The inspection began with a discussion about your self-evaluation of the school and what you and the head of school considered to be the current strengths. We also discussed new initiatives and agreed the areas we would look at. I met with three governors and the designated safeguarding lead, and looked at safeguarding documentation. I considered school documentation, including the self-evaluation, minutes of meetings of the governing body, behaviour records and incident logs. I visited classrooms with you and the head of school, speaking with pupils and looking at their work. I considered the views of 20 parents who responded to Ofsted's online questionnaire, Parent View. In addition, I considered the 17 responses to the staff survey. I reviewed a sample of books to look at the standards of pupils' work.