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Mrs Claire Matthews
Headteacher
Abbots Ripton CofE Primary School
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Dear Mrs Matthews

Short inspection of Abbots Ripton CofE Primary School

Following my visit to the school on 13 February 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 first short inspection carried out since your predecessor school was judged to be good in June 2015.

This school continues to be good.

The leadership team has maintained the good quality of education in the school since the last inspection.

Since your appointments as interim headteacher in January 2016 and substantive headteacher in April 2017, you have built a skilled and enthusiastic team which is committed to meeting the needs of pupils. As one parent commented, 'Abbots Ripton has nurtured my child's needs attentively.'

At the previous inspection the school was tasked with improving the teaching of writing by embedding assessment practice and implementing the school's handwriting policy. The school now has a robust process for assessment which includes checking judgements about pupils' attainment with teachers in other schools. Pupils work with their teachers to check their work and know what to do to improve their writing. Handwriting is taught consistently and pupils know what they have to do to earn a pen.

You ensure that teachers have access to professional training. This has enabled them to develop an exciting and engaging curriculum at this school. Your teachers also provide support to other local schools to help them to improve their teaching and develop their curriculums.

Parents, pupils and staff agreed that pupils behave well in the school. Pupils are respectful to adults and each other. During lunchtime, older pupils serve younger pupils on their tables and this gives a 'family feel' to meal times.

In lessons, pupils follow adults' instructions and work hard. Pupils know what bullying is, say that it is extremely rare, and know what to do if they have any concerns.

Governors are passionate about the school. They can talk confidently about current school improvement priorities and the actions that leaders are taking to address them. They have a particularly strong understanding of the use of additional funding, such as the pupil premium funding. They work with you and your leaders to monitor the school's work. However, evidence from minutes of meetings shows that they are not always sufficiently focused on challenging leaders to ensure that pupils reach the highest possible standards.

Most children enter the school with skills that are typical for their age. The small proportion who do not, tend to catch up quickly. In the Reception class, children are motivated and excited by their learning. Adults ask questions which enable learning to build from the children's play activities. Teaching ensures that children develop secure phonic skills that they use when reading and writing.

You ensure that the good start children make in developing phonics skills in the Reception class continues in Year 1. In 2018, every pupil met the expected standard in the phonics screening check. In key stage 1, the proportion of pupils achieving the expected standard and greater depth in reading, writing and mathematics was above the national average. Year 6 pupils made strong progress from their starting points to attain the expected standards in reading, writing and mathematics. The proportions attaining the higher standards in reading and mathematics were above average, as was the proportion of pupils attaining greater depth in writing. Discussions with pupils highlighted that they enjoy reading. They were keen to suggest authors and books that I should read.

Safeguarding is effective.

Leaders, including governors, have ensured that there is a strong culture of safeguarding pupils. It is the first item for discussion on each staff meeting agenda and is included as an area to be checked during governor monitoring visits. Staff know what to do if they have concerns about a pupil. Records of concern are well organised and enable leaders to monitor pupils closely. Leaders work closely with outside agencies to meet pupils' needs.

Staff training is comprehensive and records are used to ensure that they do not miss important updates.

All the required checks are made on the suitability of adults to work in school. They are recorded carefully and efficiently on the single central record.

Pupils of all ages told me they feel safe at school, and parents and staff agree. Pupils know how to stay safe when using the internet and say this is because of lessons the school provides about e-safety.

Inspection findings

- At the start of the inspection, we agreed that I would look at how effectively leaders are ensuring that pupils make consistently strong progress in writing. This is because assessment information shows variations in the standards being achieved for current pupils and writing is a priority in your school improvement plan.
- Your approach to teaching writing ensures that pupils know how to improve their work. Pupils could show me how they edit and improve their writing and describe what is expected of them when writing in different contexts. Opportunities to write in different subjects are securely fixed within the curriculum. Pupils from each year group could show me examples of high-quality writing across a range of different subjects. This included detailed reports about making water safe to drink in Years 5 and 6 and historical reports about the Egyptians in Years 3 and 4. Pupils' workbooks demonstrate that they are making strong progress in writing across the school. Even so, too few pupils are exceeding expectations for attainment in each age group.
- My second line of enquiry was to explore how the curriculum is meeting the needs of all pupils so that they are well prepared for the next stage of their education and life in modern Britain.
- Pupils whom I interviewed said that they enjoy the curriculum and say that teachers make it exciting. For example, to stimulate the pupils' interest, staff acted out a mock mummification from behind a screen to show the extraction of organs. Older pupils remembered fondly their teacher playing the part of a warrior as she walked across their desks. Reception children enjoy the opportunity to work in the 'wild wood' just outside the school grounds. Children were keen to show me their discoveries, such as worms and a rodent's skull.
- Pupils' workbooks show that they are accessing a broad curriculum which includes opportunities to learn about different cultures and religions. This is enhanced through discussions about British values in collective worship. Parents are provided with detailed overviews about the topics that their children will be learning about and this enables them to support them with their homework (home learning).
- My final line of enquiry explored how effectively leaders use additional funding for disadvantaged pupils, pupils with special educational needs and/or disabilities (SEND) and to promote engagement in sport and physical education (PE).
- Despite the small numbers of pupils with SEND and disadvantaged pupils, leaders ensure that the needs of individuals are met. There are effective systems for identifying pupils' needs and the school works closely with outside agencies to ensure that pupils have the support that they need. As one parent commented,

'This school has had a profound impact on my child, it has given him the confidence to read.'

- Disadvantaged pupils are making strong progress across the school. This is because of teaching in lessons and the additional support that they access which focuses on addressing gaps in their learning.
- The use of sports and PE funding has resulted in increased participation in physical activity and more opportunities for pupils to take part in competitions. Pupils also have access to a wide range of clubs which include traditional sports, judo and dance.

Next steps for the school

Leaders and those responsible for governance should ensure that:

- A greater proportion of pupils in each year group attain higher standards in their writing.

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

Yours sincerely

Keith Pullen
Ofsted Inspector

Information about the inspection

You and I discussed the lines of enquiry for this inspection, the school's internal evaluation of its performance and plans for future improvement. Meetings were held with you and your governors, including the chair of the governing body, the leader responsible for disadvantaged pupils and pupils with SEND and the leader responsible for PE and sports funding. I also spoke to representatives from the local authority and the diocese.

I gathered a range of evidence to evaluate the quality of teaching, learning and assessment. This included joint observations of teaching and learning in all classes with you. I also completed visits to lessons inside the school and outside in the 'wild wood' with your teaching and learning leader. I looked at a sample of pupils' current work across all subjects and across a wide range of abilities. I spoke informally to several pupils in classrooms about their learning and met more formally with a group of pupils to talk about their school experience and their workbooks. Policies and procedures for the safeguarding of pupils were examined, including mandatory checks made during the recruitment of new staff and records relating to referrals made to external agencies. A discussion was held with you as the school's

designated safeguarding lead. The views of 51 parents who responded to Ofsted's online questionnaire, Parent View, were considered, including 49 free-text comments. I also considered the views of 13 staff who completed online surveys during the inspection.