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Mr Ashley Izzard-Snape
Headteacher
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Dear Mr Izzard-Snape

Short inspection of Loatlands Primary School

Following my visit to the school on 29 June 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 your predecessor school was judged to be good in October 2012.

This school continues to be good.

The leadership team has maintained the good quality of education in the school since the last inspection. Since that time, the school has converted to an academy, joining with six local schools to form the Montsaye Community Learning Partnership Trust. The school's buildings have been extended and the process of expanding to a two-form entry primary school is underway. An acting headteacher has led the school for the past eight months, while you were away from the school.

You have approached school improvement in a methodical and thorough manner. The procedures and systems of working that you have introduced have enabled the acting headteacher and the school's leadership team to continue improving the school in your absence. This has ensured that the areas identified for improvement when the predecessor school was last inspected have been addressed.

The school is awash with opportunities and encouragement for pupils to write. From the moment children enter the Nursery, they are encouraged to make marks using a range of materials such as paints and chinks. Teachers plan activities that entice children to develop physically, thus preparing them for holding and writing with a pencil or pen; for example, using paints on an easel or practising pincer movements with their 'froggy fingers'. From the pupils' writing books we looked at, it is evident that pupils enjoy writing and, over time, they build their stamina for writing longer pieces independently, in a variety of styles.

Pupils of all ages have access to a wide range of resources that encourage them to write in a variety of formal and informal situations. For example, the much-improved outdoor provision for the Reception class includes a 'writing shed' which is packed to the rafters with equipment and ideas to stimulate and excite the children. The children's writing journals are a testament to the impact of this and other initiatives. For example, in one journal we looked at, between September 2015 and June 2016, the child's unassisted writing had progressed from simple marks on paper to, 'In my wrap I will put cheese, cucumbers, peppers, letis. they are delishus yummy scrummy in my tummy.'

The school's leadership team and governing body are very knowledgeable about the published information on the school's performance. You provide them with regular, detailed updates and analysis of the pupils' outcomes. Your meticulous examination of pupils' progress, attainment and attendance prevents any chance of complacency because leaders and governors have such ambition for each pupil's achievements. Where there is any indication of underachievement or poor attendance, your team is quick to act. For example, you have taken appropriate action to address the differences between the achievement of girls and boys last year in reading and writing. The school's assessment and tracking system, and work in pupils' books, indicates strongly that all groups of pupils are achieving well.

Your work to raise the attendance of disadvantaged pupils has also proved to be effective. Currently, in all but two classes, the attendance of disadvantaged pupils now matches, or exceeds, the national average for the attendance for all pupils. In the classes where the attendance is below average, you are taking every step possible to improve each pupil's attendance. However, while the school's new system for tracking and assessing pupils' progress and attainment is providing valuable information for teachers and leaders, it is not yet well enough developed to provide accurate and reliable information across the full range of subjects.

Safeguarding is effective.

Leaders and governors place the highest priority on keeping pupils safe and on ensuring that all safeguarding practices are fit for purpose. Record-keeping is extensive and up to date on matters such as child protection, poor behaviour and bullying. Senior leaders meet regularly to review recent events to identify any trends or patterns and act on these to reduce the risk of any recurrence. Procedures are followed meticulously and records show that incidents are followed up, with actions recorded and reviewed. Where necessary, documented risk assessments are in place to reduce the risk of harm to pupils or staff. Induction training for staff and volunteers includes child safeguarding, with all staff receiving annual refresher training. Governors discharge their safeguarding responsibilities effectively because their training is up to date and they understand their responsibilities under the trust's scheme of delegation.

The Year 5 pupils I spoke with explained how they are kept safe in school and how they can keep themselves safe, for example, on the internet. They are aware of the dangers of cyber bullying and its impact on others. Assemblies and dedicated e-safety days enhance the knowledge that they gain through the school's personal, social, health and citizenship education. Pupils told me about the positive relationships which they have with each other and how new starters to the school are helped to settle in through the allocation of buddies. Pupils I spoke with are confident that they can turn to any adult if they have a problem or worry, but say that incidents of bullying or name-calling are very rare. Elections to roles of responsibility such as the school council give pupils experience of democracy in action, while other British values such as tolerance and respect are evident in pupils' relationships with each other and adults, throughout the school.

Inspection findings

- The school has continued to improve since the last inspection because leaders and governors are ambitious for every pupil. They have an accurate view of the school's performance and the actions necessary to improve the school further. They insist and act upon an extensive range of detailed information on each pupil, class and year group – addressing underperformance wherever they find it.
- Governors' minutes show that they are successful in holding the headteacher to account for pupils' outcomes and school improvement. They ask challenging questions and insist on a range of evidence in support of the information they are given by school leaders. The chair and vice-chair of the governing body use their professional expertise and excellent knowledge of the school to model good practice to new and inexperienced governors.
- The school receives effective challenge from the Montsaye Community Learning Partnership Trust. The headteacher and chair of the governing body are held to account for pupils' outcomes and school improvement at the regular meetings of the trust's strategy board. Trust and school leaders value the challenge offered by the trust and its school improvement adviser and this is ensuring that the school continues to improve.
- The trust offers good support to the school. The close proximity of the other schools in the trust allows for regular development opportunities for leaders and teachers, along with the monitoring and agreeing of standards of pupils' work. Membership of the trust also allowed for the secondment of the deputy headteacher from another trust school into the role of acting headteacher, thus ensuring the continuity of approach and continued school improvement.
- Senior leaders are passionate about the academic, social and emotional outcomes for every pupil. They pay particular attention to the achievements of groups of pupils that are typically at risk of underperformance such as the disadvantaged, and pupils who have special educational needs and/or disabilities. As a result, additional support is well targeted and the vast majority of these pupils make at least the progress expected for pupils their age.

- Leaders use the additional funding provided through the pupil premium very effectively to support disadvantaged pupils. As well as additional learning support, a dedicated breakfast club and guaranteed opportunities to attend clubs and events, disadvantaged pupils have access to virtual vouchers, with nominal cash values. These provide pupils and their parents with greater choice about how the pupil premium is used to support their individual needs and interests.
- Children enter the early years at levels of development which are below those typically seen for children their age. Often, their speaking and listening skills are underdeveloped. By the time they leave the early years, an increasing number achieve a good level of development, with a greater proportion than seen nationally expected to achieve this level by the end of this academic year.
- By the end of key stage 1, pupils' attainment is broadly similar to national figures in reading, writing and mathematics. In 2015, the proportion attaining at the higher levels exceeded the national average in writing and mathematics.
- Pupils' progress during their time in key stage 2 showed an improvement in 2015. Nevertheless, the proportion of girls and boys, including disadvantaged pupils, making more than expected progress was below the national average in reading and writing.
- In 2015, the proportion of key stage 2 pupils attaining at the level expected for their age exceeded the national average in reading, writing and mathematics. Pupils' attainment in mathematics showed a sharp rise. The proportion of pupils reaching the higher levels in reading and writing was below the national average.
- Leaders have been meticulous in their plans to secure improvements in mathematics and this resulted in improved outcomes for pupils in 2015. They have taken the same approach to reading and writing, seeking external support and readily acting on the advice and guidance they have received to ensure that any improvements are sustained over time. The quality of pupils' work, including work in their writing and topic books, shows that boys and girls, including pupils from disadvantaged backgrounds, are making good progress in reading and writing.
- Pupils of all ages are encouraged to write, without direct assistance and for extended periods, from an early age. They are encouraged to use the skills and writing techniques they have learned, while accepting that they will make mistakes from which they must learn. As a result, pupils of all ages are increasingly confident writers and making good progress this year.
- Teachers are consistent in demanding well-presented writing that reflects the pride pupils take in their work. They give pupils time to reflect upon and respond to feedback on their work. However, this feedback is often vague, identifying, for example that improvements in punctuation are needed without indicating precisely which aspects of punctuation need to improve.

- Leaders have worked with the trust to create a new system of assessing and tracking pupils' achievements. They are confident that this method provides a useful tool for recording assessment information, particularly when used alongside the monitoring of teaching and learning in lessons and the quality of work in pupils' books. However, this recording system is not yet effective in assessing pupils' performance across the full curriculum.

Next steps for the school

Leaders and those responsible for governance should further improve pupils' outcomes by ensuring that:

- teachers identify more precisely for pupils the next steps they need to take to improve their work
- the system for tracking and assessing pupils' progress and attainment is further developed to include subjects across the curriculum.

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

Yours sincerely

Stephen McMullan
Her Majesty's Inspector

Information about the inspection

During the inspection, I met with you, the acting headteacher, the deputy headteacher, the chair and vice-chair of the governing body, the chair and the primary representative on the trust board of the Montsaye Community Learning Partnership Trust, and some pupils from Year 5. I considered the 44 responses on Parent View, Ofsted's online questionnaire. Together, we visited all classes, with the exception of Year 6 who were on a residential trip, and we looked at a sample of pupils' writing. I looked at a range of documents, including: an evaluation of the school's performance; plans for school improvement; information on how the pupil premium (additional funding for pupils currently, or previously, in receipt of free school meals) is spent; a number of policy documents, including those for child protection and special educational needs; and the minutes from meetings of the governing body. I looked at the school's website, which meets requirements on the publication of specified information.