

8 February 2019

Mr Lee Hurling
Executive Headteacher
Rothwell Junior School
Gladstone Street
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Northamptonshire
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Dear Mr Lee Hurling

Short inspection of Rothwell Junior School

Following my visit to the school on 23 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 first short inspection carried out since the school was judged to be good in May 2015.

This school continues to be good.

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

The leadership team has a good knowledge of the school's strengths and recognises the areas that need further improvement. Your current evaluation document is an accurate assessment of your school's strengths and your school development plan addresses the areas that you and your staff need to improve further.

The governing body performs its strategic role effectively, holding leaders to account while challenging and offering support as appropriate. Governors have a good knowledge of the school's development priorities and are updated regularly on how the work of the school is meeting these priorities.

You and your staff provide effective support for the high number of pupils whose home circumstances may make them vulnerable. You invest appropriate resources into making sure that this group of pupils' emotional and social needs are met.

Staff consistently model cooperation, calmness, good manners and enthusiasm to pupils. Consequently, teacher-pupil relationships are strong and pupils report that they feel well cared for and supported by both teachers and support assistants in school.

Staff feel valued. They appreciate the opportunities they have to develop their

professional practice and consider that their contributions to school improvement are recognised and worthy.

Being a member of a trust, the Montsaye Community Learning Partnership, has provided opportunities for staff to develop their practice. You have ensured that teachers have the opportunity to work together by timetabling regular meetings for subject leaders to meet, share good practice and learn from one another

Teachers promote pupils' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development well. Pupils understand diversity; they learn about different religions and recognise that others have beliefs that differ from their own.

Pupils display positive attitudes to learning in lessons and their behaviour is good. They are friendly, polite and respectful both to adults in school and to each other. Pupils speak positively about their school. One pupil commented that he enjoyed coming to school because, 'School is a happy place, it's not boring and teachers are always trying to make it better and to make learning fun.'

Parents speak highly of the school. They appreciate the warm, supportive atmosphere. One parent commented, 'The staff on reception can't do enough – they know all our names.' However, some parents said they would like their children to receive more homework to prepare them better for life at secondary school.

The previous inspection report asked senior leaders to ensure that pupils improved the presentation of their work. The majority of pupils now present their work neatly in a wide range of subjects. Much of the pupils' topic work on the Second World War, The Victorians and Vikings was of very high quality.

Reducing pupil absence was another highlighted area for improvement. You have appointed a leader for vulnerable pupils who has worked hard to reduce absence. Reasons for pupils' absence have been analysed and support has been provided to the pupil or family as necessary. Parents are informed by letter if their child's attendance is an issue. Leaders engage with parents by setting up attendance contracts that are used to monitor and improve attendance.

The school also promotes good attendance by offering enjoyable activities before school starts each morning, such as 'sensory circuits' in the school hall. Current school attendance data indicates that persistent absence has reduced and is now at the national average.

The last inspection identified the need to ensure that pupils made better progress in mathematics and had more opportunities to improve their mathematical skills when working in other subjects.

A leader for mathematics has been in post for one year and done much to improve teachers' understanding of the teaching of mathematics. Teachers' planning has been improved to create a more consistent approach to the teaching of mathematics and the same common 'steps to learning' are now being used across all year groups.

A greater emphasis has been given to basic arithmetic, including daily mental mathematics work. This has started to improve pupils' ability to complete calculations accurately and quickly. Additionally, small-group and one-to-one support has been provided for pupils who are having difficulty by adjusting timetables to enable class teachers to undertake longer focused support sessions with these pupils.

The headteacher runs a breakfast club session to extend a group of pupils' learning by providing additional greater depth challenges. This and the other developments are starting to have a positive impact on pupils' progress in mathematics.

Safeguarding is effective.

The leadership team has ensured that safeguarding arrangements are fit for purpose. Systems are simple and clear and are followed well. Staff understand their roles and responsibilities in ensuring the safety of all pupils. In addition to formal training, all staff receive safeguarding tips and updates in a weekly staff briefing.

Records for safeguarding are detailed and stored appropriately. A safeguarding link governor undertakes periodic checks of the school's safeguarding records.

Pupils feel safe and very well cared for. They report that incidents of bullying are rare but are confident that staff would act quickly should any occur. They reported that there 'is always someone you can speak to if you have a problem'.

Inspection findings

- Leaders are aware that the rates of progress and attainment for disadvantaged pupils are not as good as they should be. You have put strategies in place to help this group. The current work of these pupils indicates that the strategies are starting to have a positive impact on their progress.
- Over 40% of the school's large group of disadvantaged pupils have significant emotional needs that are a potential barrier to learning. Leaders invest time and resources into supporting these pupils. A play therapist and family support worker are employed by the school and an onsite nurture unit is provided. Vulnerable pupils are provided with 1:1 and small-group activities that help to foster their personal development and improve self-esteem.
- One small group were in the nurture unit making an apple crumble. They were cooperating well with each other and relishing the opportunity to work in a small group on a practical task that was successfully helping to build their confidence. The impact of support for disadvantaged pupils is carefully monitored. Adaptations or different strategies are introduced if monitoring indicates that these interventions are not having the desired impact.
- The school has also enlisted the services of additional volunteers to help disadvantaged pupils with their reading. Gaps have started to close between the performances of disadvantaged and other pupils, but more remains to be done.
- Another focus of the inspection was to see what leaders are doing to strengthen

pupils' progress in reading following the disappointing results in the key stage 2 national assessments in 2018.

- Leaders are aware of the issues affecting reading performance and have acted to improve progress in reading. Reading journals have been introduced and reading skills, such as inference and deduction, are now taught explicitly through a consistent whole-school approach to reading.
- Reading for pleasure is now given a higher prominence in school. Designated reading areas have been established for each year group and pupils' free reading is monitored through the use of new reading diaries. Regular reading is now expected. It is rewarded through the school's use of raffle tickets and prizes.
- Leaders have used staff development time to improve the teaching of reading and to share information about the skills necessary for pupils to attain greater depth in reading.
- This consistent approach to reading needs to be embedded further to ensure that pupils' progress and attainment in this subject continues to improve.

Next steps for the school

Leaders and those responsible for governance should ensure that:

- there is a consistent approach to the teaching of reading, particularly in the teaching of higher-order reading skills
- the progress for disadvantaged pupils is improved so that a larger proportion reach or exceed the expected standard by the end of key stage 2
- strategies continue to be developed and embedded to accelerate progress for all pupils in mathematics.

I am copying this letter to the chair of the governing body and the chief executive officer of the multi-academy trust, the regional schools commissioner and the director of children's services for Northamptonshire. This letter will be published on the Ofsted website.

Yours sincerely

John Savage
Ofsted Inspector

Information about the inspection

During the inspection, I held meetings with pupils, staff and governors. I also spoke with the chief executive officer of the multi-academy trust. I had regular meetings with you and your deputies. I visited classrooms to observe lessons together with your deputy headteacher responsible for teaching and learning. I looked at pupils' work in a range of subjects and year groups. I considered 47 responses to Ofsted's online survey, Parent View, 18 free-text responses from parents and additional

verbal communications with parents at the start of the school day. I also considered 39 responses to Ofsted's staff survey. I scrutinised a range of school documents, including records relating to safeguarding, behaviour and policies. I also looked at information published on the school website.