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Dear Mrs O'Neill

Short inspection of Lyncrest Primary School

Following my visit to the school on 16 March 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 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. The school is extremely well led and managed. Leaders are aspirational for pupils and committed to the continued improvement of the school. They have a precise and accurate understanding of the school's strengths and areas for improvement. You have used your detailed knowledge of pupils to create a sharply focused school improvement plan, designed to maximise pupils' progress, which is known and understood by all.

You have maintained the significant strengths noted at the last inspection, particularly in terms of pupils' behaviour. Pupils are happy, confident and articulate. You ensure that the school's core values, such as respect, justice and perseverance, are regularly reinforced through assemblies and lessons. Pupils are proud of the school and have a good understanding of diversity. They told me that the best thing about the school was that 'everyone is accepted'. Parents and pupils appreciate the warm and welcoming atmosphere which you have created.

Leaders have worked closely to address the areas for improvement identified at the time of the last inspection. You provide appropriate training for all staff linked to whole-school developments. We saw together that all staff are consistent in their application of school systems and policies. This is helping to improve the progress which pupils make during their time at the school.

You have made developing pupils' writing a whole-school priority. Teachers support

pupils to use and practise cursive handwriting. You have ensured that this starts in the early years. Leaders provide children in Reception with additional resources to develop their fine motor skills, and therefore their handwriting. Evidence in children's learning journals demonstrates that they are given regular opportunities to write the phonics sounds which they learn. This is helping to secure their understanding of sounds, letters and spellings. The pupils, who started this last year and are now in Year 1, have made rapid progress in their writing as a result. Most can write down their ideas independently, using full stops and include some effective description.

Pupils develop their literacy skills through the wider curriculum. Leaders have ensured that topics, such as adventure and sport, engage boys' interests and help them to develop their ideas for writing. This is helping boys to make better progress in writing so that it matches the good progress of girls. Most pupils now have a clearer understanding of the features of different types of writing and how to plan and organise their work. For example, pupils in Year 2 learned about the queen and then successfully wrote information leaflets. Teachers consistently emphasise the importance of using correct grammar to pupils, and this is helping pupils to improve their writing. A Year 5 girl explained accurately what 'parenthesis' was and understood how to use it in her descriptive writing.

Pupils' progress at the end of key stage 2 has been consistently at least in line with national averages in reading, writing and mathematics. However, leaders acknowledge that more of the most able pupils, in particular the most able disadvantaged pupils, need to reach the higher standard in all subjects at the end of Year 6.

The proportion of children who achieve a good level of development in the early years has been inconsistent. Leaders identified that this was because children's use of language was underdeveloped and they then provided staff with additional training to support children's speech and language skills. Leaders have worked steadfastly to improve the provision and quality of teaching and learning in the early years. Governors have supported the funding of two additional teaching assistants this year to work closely with teachers and provide more personalised intervention for children. All staff use effective questioning to deepen children's knowledge and understanding. Children behave well, listen intently and follow instructions quickly. Current school information indicates that most children will achieve a good level of development this year.

Safeguarding is effective.

The leadership team has ensured that safeguarding arrangements are fit for purpose and records are detailed and of high quality. You complete an annual safeguarding audit to check that safeguarding arrangements continue to be robust.

All statutory checks on staff are carried out and recorded carefully. All staff receive regular and appropriate training and have a good understanding of their responsibilities to ensure children's safety and well-being.

The files you showed me indicate that staff make prompt referrals when they have any concerns. You and your team take great pride in knowing each pupil and their family well and this ensures prompt action should the need arise. Leaders are tenacious in seeking external support when needed. Leaders, governors and staff undertake regular training relevant to child protection and safeguarding issues, such as the risks of extremism and domestic abuse.

Pupils understand how to keep themselves safe. You have provided opportunities for them to learn about issues such as e-safety. Visitors, such as the police, also visit the school to remind pupils how to stay safe in the community. Pupils say bullying is rare and, if it does happen, they trust staff to deal with it quickly and effectively.

Inspection findings

- You have ensured that leadership capacity is strong across the school. You are very well supported by two assistant headteachers and an extended leadership team. Leaders have accountability for the areas which they oversee and you all work together to support whole-school improvement. The governing body provides leaders with effective support and challenge and ensures that government funding is used to have a positive impact on pupils' well-being and progress.
- You work with staff from other local schools to ensure that teachers' assessments are accurate. Teachers and teaching assistants use assessment information about pupils to plan learning that takes most pupils on from what they already know and can do. Leaders regularly check assessment information and provide timely intervention for any pupil who is falling behind. Leaders are not afraid to change things when they are not working or having a positive impact on pupils' outcomes.
- Teachers and teaching assistants work closely together to plan and adapt learning and personalise learning targets for all pupils, including disadvantaged pupils. Leaders have identified that more of the most able pupils, including the most able disadvantaged pupils, need to reach the higher standard at the end of Year 6. They have provided teachers with additional training and resources to address this. It is too early to judge the impact of this yet.
- Teachers have high expectations for what pupils can achieve. Teachers and pupils have positive relationships, and pupils willingly follow teachers' instructions in lessons. Teachers plan lessons which hold pupils' interest and capture their imagination. Classrooms are attractive; displays celebrate pupils' work and provide them with helpful prompts and examples of how to make their work better. The pupils who I spoke with said that they enjoy learning and challenge.
- The majority of parents would recommend the school to others. The headteacher and staff are held in high regard. Parents and pupils alike comment on how approachable and accessible senior leaders and teachers are. Parents value the termly learning conferences where they meet with teachers to discuss their

child's progress and set learning targets together.

- Leaders provide good care and support for vulnerable pupils. Leaders ensure that this support is personalised for each pupil and they carefully monitor the impact it has on pupils' well-being. They provide the minority of pupils who need it with additional nurturing and support to improve their emotional well-being and readiness for learning, for example at the 'marvellous mealtime' lunchtime colouring and computing club.
- Leaders are passionate about providing an inclusive learning environment and removing any barriers to learning. The school is a flagship school for their positive work in this area and has been awarded the quality mark for inclusion for the sixth year running.
- Leaders are highly considerate and supportive of all pupils' well-being. Leaders recently organised a whole-school event, where pupils learned a 'brilliant breathing' calming technique and how to put on their 'I can jackets' when faced with new challenges. All teachers and classes have 'worry munchers', in the form of characters with pouches, where pupils are encouraged to share their worries. This means that any concerns that a pupil may have are dealt with promptly, before they have time to escalate. Pupils who I spoke with said they find this very reassuring as they know that there is always someone to listen to them and provide support if needed.
- Levels of pupils' absence have been above the national average since the last inspection but took a slight dip in 2016. Disadvantaged pupils are also absent from school more than other pupils. However, through publishing weekly attendance figures, celebrating good attendance and challenging absences promptly, leaders are taking all possible steps to maximise pupils' attendance.

Next steps for the school

Leaders and those responsible for governance should ensure that:

- more of the most able pupils, including the most able disadvantaged pupils, reach the higher standard in reading, writing and mathematics at the end of Year 6.

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

Sally Smith
Her Majesty's Inspector

Information about the inspection

During the inspection, I met with you and shared my key lines of enquiry. I also met with senior leaders and representatives from the governing body. I spoke with parents before school and met with a group of pupils in key stage 2 to talk about their school experience.

You and I visited all classes and examined pupils' workbooks, as well as talking to pupils to evaluate the quality of their learning. We also looked at a sample of pupils' writing books from different year groups. In addition, I scrutinised the school's safeguarding arrangements and records, including the school's record of safeguarding recruitment checks on staff. I evaluated the school's documentation in relation to pupils' attainment and progress and reviewed the school's own evaluation of its work, improvement plans and minutes of the governing body meetings. I took account of the 49 responses to Parent View, Ofsted's online survey, and the 23 responses from parents to the Ofsted free-text service. The 16 responses to the online staff survey and the 21 responses to Ofsted's online pupil survey were also considered.