

26 September 2018

Miss Karen Hayward  
Executive Headteacher  
Moggerhanger Lower School  
Blunham Road  
Moggerhanger  
Bedfordshire  
MK44 3RD

Dear Miss Hayward

### **Short inspection of Moggerhanger Lower School**

Following my visit to the school on 12 September 2018, 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 November 2014.

#### **This school continues to be good.**

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

You and your senior leaders have successfully managed a number of necessary changes over a relatively short period of time. When the previous headteacher left the school in July 2017, expertise was sought from Sandy Upper School (now Sandy Secondary School), and the leadership of Moggerhanger Lower School was reviewed and restructured. The school federated with Sandy Upper School in March 2018 and, as executive headteacher of both schools, you acted quickly to address a number of identified weaknesses.

Your decisive actions have put the school in a more secure financial position, improved the quality of governance and strengthened procedures for the safeguarding of children. Parents who responded to Ofsted's online questionnaire, Parent View, are overwhelmingly supportive of the school. One parent wrote: 'Our child has received fantastic care during her time at Moggerhanger. The class-based staff are wonderfully caring and supportive. We're pleased with the progress she has made.'

Your detailed improvement documentation accurately evaluates the school's strengths and weaknesses. For example, you are very much aware that too few of your pupils make the progress of which they are capable in mathematics. You are also considering ways to ensure that your most-able pupils make more rapid progress. Children in the early years foundation stage typically achieve well from

their low starting points. However, the proportion of pupils meeting the required standard in the phonics screening check in Year 1 dipped significantly in 2018.

The school provides a happy and vibrant learning environment for its pupils. Pupils are very well mannered and courteous towards visitors and one another. The school's small size creates a family atmosphere, and pupils told me that they get on well with their teachers. I observed pupils enjoying their morning breaktime, playing games and interacting well with members of staff in a safe and secure environment.

The older pupils in your recently introduced Year 5 take pride in wearing their distinctive uniform. They enjoy travelling to the federation's secondary school four times a week for their afternoon lessons. This arrangement clearly develops their confidence and self-esteem.

You have strengthened the governance of the school through the federation arrangement and by deploying highly skilled governors to best effect. The experienced governing board has improved systems for holding Moggerhanger's leaders to account. Governors constantly review their own effectiveness by auditing their skills audits, and they have a separate termly action plan. They are respected by school staff and also have a strong presence in the school.

### **Safeguarding is effective.**

The arrangements for safeguarding have been reviewed and significantly strengthened, which makes them fit for purpose. Pupils' well-being is paramount, and all staff in the school have undergone thorough training to ensure that pupils are kept safe and secure. All staff have received and read up-to-date documentation relating to safeguarding and child protection.

The checks carried out to make sure that staff are suitable to work with children are thorough, and are recorded appropriately on the school's single central record. My examination of documentation relating to pupils who are vulnerable or at risk shows that these records are securely stored, with details of discussions, actions taken, involvement of external agencies and the resolutions achieved.

### **Inspection findings**

- I looked initially at how effectively leaders and governors had addressed the areas for improvement identified at the time of the previous inspection. I was particularly keen to look at this area because the school has undergone several contextual changes which may have affected the pace of improvement and impact of leadership over time.
- Leaders have drawn on the expertise that exists in the other school within the federation. For example, you have enabled teachers from Moggerhanger to visit the school, discuss good practice and model this in their classroom. Much work has taken place in improving the quality of mathematics teaching and, hence, pupils' outcomes. You have rightly targeted the teaching of mathematics when observing pupils' learning. The lead teacher for mathematics has also produced a

suitable improvement plan which identifies appropriate actions and challenging targets. Homework in mathematics now routinely includes 10 challenge questions to encourage pupils to apply their reasoning skills more regularly.

- Our joint visits to lessons show that teachers have risen to the challenge of teaching mixed-age classes. They understand that those pupils who are most able, but in the lower of the two age groups, should not be hindered from making the progress of which they are capable. My evidence suggests that further time is required to demonstrate the full impact of teachers' planning for learning on pupils' rates of progress. Pupils' presentation of their work is typically of good quality, although some variation remains.
- You have given careful consideration to the content of the curriculum, as you describe the previous curriculum as 'stale'. After much research looking at what happens in some of the highest performing schools, you have opted to follow a book-based curriculum. You believe that more pupils have the potential to make stronger progress in reading and writing than they do at present. You wisely continue to monitor the impact of these strategies through your observations of learning, scrutiny of achievement information and reviewing of the quality of pupils' work in their books.
- You rightly insist that teachers take account of the information they have on pupils' prior attainment when planning for learning. During my visits to lessons, teachers demonstrated an improved awareness of the needs of the most able pupils, providing them with challenging tasks when they had completed their work, rather than giving them more of the same. Pupils also told me that they are encouraged to work independently and to think about how they learn. You have also introduced more structured homework which helps pupils to build on their skills and knowledge.
- I also investigated why the proportion of pupils in Year 1 who were meeting the required standard in the phonics screening check uncharacteristically fell in 2018 from 90% to 43%. Even bearing in mind that pupil numbers are small, the outcomes were disappointing.
- You quickly responded to these outcomes by making carefully considered changes. For example, staff teaching phonics have also visited schools which excel in the teaching of phonics to bring back good practice to your school. Your new book-based curriculum also aims to develop pupils' skills in using phonics, as well as developing their love of reading and writing.
- Finally, I looked at the actions you are taking to improve pupils' attendance and to reduce pupils' persistent absence. You have conveyed a clear message to parents that regular attendance is linked to high achievement. You rightly challenge any parent who chooses to take their child on holiday during term time. Pupils are encouraged to attend school regularly through your rewards systems and assemblies.
- Your strategies have started to reap rewards, and pupils' attendance improved in 2017 to 2018. More importantly, you have halved the proportion of pupils who are persistently absent, although this is still too high. You have also established productive and collaborative links with other local schools to form an accurate

picture of trends in attendance for your pupils and their siblings in other schools.

### **Next steps for the school**

Leaders and those responsible for governance should ensure that:

- pupils' outcomes in mathematics continue to improve
- teaching consistently meets the needs of the most able pupils so that the proportion working at greater depth increases
- the proportion of pupils meeting the required standard in the phonics screening checks rises to above average
- the proportion of pupils who are persistently absent continues to fall.

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

Yours sincerely

John Daniell  
**Ofsted Inspector**

### **Information about the inspection**

I met with you and other senior leaders, as well as middle leaders, to discuss progress since the previous inspection. I met with two members of the governing board and held a telephone discussion with your school improvement partner. I met with a group of pupils from Years 3 and 4.

I scrutinised a variety of sources of information, including your self-evaluation summary document and the school's plans for improvement. I held a meeting to examine the school's safeguarding and child protection procedures, the records of checks that leaders make on the suitability of staff to work with children and information relating to behaviour and attendance.

Together, we undertook observations of learning across the school, apart from the Nursery Year. We viewed work in pupils' books and spoke with pupils about their learning when visiting lessons. I took account of the views of 11 staff and 20 parents who responded to Ofsted's questionnaires.