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Mrs R Tingle
Headteacher
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Dear Mrs Tingle

Short inspection of Prettygate Infant School

Following my visit to the school on 9 February 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 the school was judged to be good in March 2011.

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 appointment as the full-time headteacher in 2013, you have developed the school's capacity for improvement by strengthening middle and senior leadership. In 2015, you appointed an assistant headteacher, and a leader for the early years joined the leadership team. These appointments have enabled you to concentrate fully on improving teaching and learning. This was evident during my visit. These actions have added to the capacity of leaders at all levels and have resulted in key improvements in the school's performance. Roles and responsibilities have been reviewed ensuring that the focus is firmly on teaching, learning and assessment to raise achievement in both phases.

It is clear from my discussions with your leadership team and governors that your drive for excellence is shared. They share your vision for the school to play an even stronger part in the community.

You have tackled pockets of underachievement in teaching decisively, with both support and challenge. Teachers are now held to account for the progress of their pupils in all areas of the curriculum. You and your senior leaders check regularly on

the quality of teaching and use the information well to highlight strengths and areas for improvement. Senior leaders are effectively coaching and mentoring colleagues to ensure that they are supported to improve their practice. The routine checking of pupils' progress by looking at their books and talking with them is proving to be very effective. Pupils clearly enjoy coming to your office with their successes, while also keenly accepting the challenge you then give them. Pupils in need of additional support to catch up receive high-quality additional teaching. These actions have ensured that almost all groups of pupils and individuals are successful in their learning and achieve well.

The last inspection identified that robust management systems were not yet in place, particularly for the monitoring of pupils' progress and teaching. The robustness with which you and your team are now monitoring the school's work is strong. However, this does not yet inform the school's self-evaluation well enough. It is too focused on actions rather than using evidence to evaluate success. For example, the progress of children in the early years is not highlighted. It does not, therefore, enable leaders, staff and governors to celebrate the excellent leadership and provision that leads to the good progress of children. Measurable outcomes resulting from effective self-evaluation are not yet clear enough in the school's plans for improvement. However, it is evident from my visit that you, your leaders and your governors know the school well and know what still needs to be done. You have achieved a great deal since the last inspection which has ensured that pupils continue to receive a good education.

You and your staff have responded well to the changing backgrounds of pupils joining the school. The strong relationships and commitment by all staff to ensure the well-being of all pupils create a caring, calm and harmonious ethos. Pupils are very respectful of each other and are kind and very willing to help each other. School council members told me that they 'enjoy helping others'. Pupils appreciate the support that teachers and other adults give them. Pupils told me that they know how well they are doing by adults' comments and by 'golden ticks' in their books. However, some pupils also said that they find some of the work too easy, in particular in writing, which is largely of a good quality throughout the school. The curriculum enables pupils to have many experiences of other cultures and to recognise differences in people. As a result, pupils' spiritual, moral, social and cultural education is promoted extremely well.

Parents are supportive of the school and appreciate all the hard work that you and your staff do to ensure that their children receive a good education. One parent who expressed a view on Parent View, the online survey provided by Ofsted, said, 'my daughter is very happy and content at school and I think this is due to the secure and happy environment of the school and the wonderful teaching staff'. You and your leaders have ensured that there are many opportunities for parents to come into school. However, some parents expressed a wish for more information about how their child is doing at school. There were also some requests for more

information on how parents can support their children at home. Having met your team today, I am confident that you will embrace such positive responses.

You and your leaders have accurately assessed where the school is now and what it needs to do to further improve. You have pinpointed many of the key priorities for the next academic year. You also continue to refine these based on the accurate information you are gathering about the school's work. For example, you are aware of the need to improve progress in mathematics in Key Stage 1 and to ensure that any inconsistencies in the quality of teaching between classes continue to be identified and addressed.

Safeguarding is effective.

In the last inspection, safeguarding was judged to be satisfactory. You were rightly concerned about the robustness with which the school was addressing this important aspect of its work. You have worked hard to ensure that safeguarding continues to meet statutory requirements. All staff and governors understand the importance of keeping pupils safe and take their responsibilities seriously. Part of the school's actions include, for example, strengthening the role of the Family Liaison Support Worker. This has been key in raising the profile of regular, punctual attendance for some groups of pupils. The relationship that the school now has with its families is stronger. The impact of this can be seen in improved attendance of individuals and groups of pupils, and parents' better understanding of the impact of poor attendance on their child's progress.

Inspection findings

- Governors have invested wisely in key appointments to strengthen the leadership of the school. Leadership of the early years is particularly strong, resulting in excellent provision for the very youngest children in the school. The appointment of an assistant headteacher to strengthen the leadership team is key to the school's continued drive to improve progress and the quality of teaching, learning and assessment. Focused visits have enabled effective monitoring and, as a result, governors know the school well.
- Key appointments to middle and senior leader roles model leadership skills well. As a result, less experienced teachers or those new to the profession are supported well in how to lead areas of the wider curriculum other than English, mathematics and science. Your senior leaders have established an effective system to monitor pupils' progress in such areas as history, geography and art. This has provided you with valuable information about both the new curriculum and the identification of support for non-specialist teachers. The work that leaders have done with the junior school in this area is proving to be very successful in establishing a seamless transition in pupils' learning.
- Leaders took the brave decision to establish their own assessment system. You sensibly took time to review what the school needed to know from its

tracking of pupils, and have designed a robust system. You recognise that this is continually being refined as you and your leaders discuss what the information is telling you. The identification of gaps in pupils' learning, impact of good-quality teaching and narrowing of differences between groups of pupils is very effective. As a consequence, the proportion of pupils whose progress is accelerating in, for example, writing is increasing.

- Pupils' rates of progress in mathematics, however, lag behind. You have prioritised this area for continued improvement. The leader for mathematics, who is relatively new to her role, has already begun to identify precisely what needs to be done. However, the plan for improvement is not yet focused enough on pupils' progress. You feel that by tightening this plan, you and your leaders will be better able to target resources and see the impact that their actions have had on pupils' progress.
- The new curriculum is developing well. You have been keen to ensure that the wider curriculum enhances pupils' cultural development. Pupils welcome this and say that they enjoy the visitors that come to the school. For example, during my visit, Year 2 pupils had a drama workshop on the Great Fire of London. Pupils were excited and wholly engaged with the enactment of this historic event and were keen to tell me about it. As a result, the quality of pupils' writing after such well-planned activities was strong. Leaders have also ensured that pupils use their knowledge, skills and understanding of mathematics and English in other areas of the curriculum. The learning is therefore relevant, motivating and often innovative, with pupils saying it is 'exciting and fantastic'.
- The overall attainment of pupils at the end of Key Stage 1 continues to be significantly above the national average. Progress of pupils currently in the school is strong in English but less so in mathematics. You and your leaders are addressing some inconsistency in teaching between classes. As a consequence, progress is beginning to be more even for most groups of pupils. Pupils' progress is supported by effective additional adult support in the vast majority of classes.
- The teaching of phonics is good. Pupils achieve above the national average in the Year 1 phonics screening check and use their skills well in both reading and writing. The English leader has focused on ensuring that spelling and punctuation are used well in pupils' writing. The evidence of this work is clear in pupils' books that we looked at together. The leader is clear that the areas of focus in the school's plans for improvement are entirely appropriate. Examples include linking the strong emphasis you have on reading with pupils 'recognising themselves as authors' and teachers planning more regular opportunities for pupils to write at length. Focused monitoring of these areas during the next term will enable the English lead to feed more timely information about the impact of the actions she has taken into the school's self-evaluation.
- The proportion of children achieving a good level of development at the end of the Reception Year continues to be above the national average. Children

enter the early years with development that is typical for their age, and come from a variety of local provisions, including many further afield. The early years leader has been instrumental in establishing good links with all providers and parents. As a result, parents are very happy with the way their children settle and feel that children make good progress. One parent said, 'my son has settled into his first year in school so well and so fast. I am extremely impressed by the teaching staff and also with the feedback and contact that the school offers'. The learning environment is highly effective in supporting all children, including the growing proportion of children who have additional needs. Children are, therefore, well prepared for Year 1.

Next steps for the school

Leaders and governors should ensure that:

- improvement planning at all levels is sharpened so that targets are more closely linked to pupils' progress and leaders' monitoring effectively informs the school's assessment of its performance
- the school's own assessment system continues to provide leaders with the information they need to accurately identify pupils' progress and attainment
- the proportion of pupils making more than expected progress in mathematics is increased.

I am copying this letter to the Chair of the Governing Body, the Regional Schools Commissioner and the Director of Children's Services for Essex County Council. This letter will be published on the Ofsted website.

Yours sincerely

Ruth Brock
Her Majesty's Inspector

Information about the inspection

I met with you, senior and middle leaders, the Chair of the Governing Body and two other governors, and a group of pupils. I spoke with a representative from the local authority. I looked at views expressed by parents on Ofsted's site, Parent View. I scrutinised the school's own assessment information and work in pupils' books with you and your senior leaders. I visited all classes, often with you, and spoke with individual pupils about their work. I reviewed a range of documentation, including the school's plans for improvement and evaluation of its performance, minutes of meetings and all relevant documentation regarding safeguarding, including the single central record.