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Mr Andrew Emms  
Headteacher  
Cedars Park Community Primary School  
Pintail Road  
Stowmarket  
Suffolk  
IP14 5FP

Dear Mr Emms

### **Short inspection of Cedars Park Community Primary School**

Following my visit to the school on 18 May 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 February 2011.

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

The leadership team has maintained the good quality of education in the school since the last inspection. There was a period during the past two years when pupils' performance declined and changes in leadership brought uncertainty for parents and staff. Since January 2016, the senior leaders and the governing body have resolved these issues. The school is now in a position to move forward with confidence. There is nothing in the way now to stop pupils doing well and for parents and staff to leave past uncertainties behind.

The dip in performance in 2015 meant that pupils' progress was as expected, rather than good. Attainment was below age-related expectations in writing. Having identified the problem, staff took decisive action, which has successfully brought pupils' work up to a higher standard.

One child in a Reception class wrote to me to say that the teacher 'is superb. She makes lessons really fun and she teaches good stuff. She is good to me!'. That is right, because provision for children in the Reception classes is a strength of the school. Children are well prepared for the Year 1 curriculum. Many achieve above the national average for the early learning goals. The performance of disadvantaged children and boys is lower than that of others, but their achievements are fast approaching the high standards reached by their friends.

Pupils of all ages are keen to come to school in the morning. They waste no time in getting to class as soon as the gate opens. They conscientiously get on with checking their work from the previous day and get to assembly promptly. They like lessons and they like their teachers and support staff. They behave well and are keen to answer questions to show what they know and can do, or to ask about things that they do not know enough about. They are particularly good at celebrating one another's successes.

Classrooms are organised well to help pupils get the most from lessons. There is plenty of space and good resources. Information on classroom walls is used well by pupils to check what to do if they get stuck or need more ideas. The work on display in corridors shows a curriculum rich in opportunities to enjoy learning and achieve well. Writing is prominently displayed and celebrated throughout the building, and not only from English lessons. Good-quality literacy work in science and topic work shows how well pupils develop their writing across a range of activities. The display from 'Shakespeare week' shows how all classes contributed enthusiastically to the recent celebrations. Bright garlands from the stage set dangle from the ceiling and portraits of Tudors shine out from the walls.

The uncertainty about senior leadership and the succession of interim leaders meant that some aspects of leadership were sidelined while more pressing day-to-day priorities were addressed. As a result, the strategic use of assessment, particularly in response to the changes in the national curriculum and assessment levels, has not provided a full overview of pupils' performance, and middle leaders have not played a full part in monitoring and improving the school's work.

### **Safeguarding is effective.**

Those responsible for overseeing the arrangements for safeguarding are well informed about what to do to protect children and how to do it well. Staff report any concerns appropriately and quickly and referrals to support services are completed promptly when needed. There are opportunities at the start and end of each day for parents to talk to staff about any worries, which helps them to pick up and follow up any concerns.

Pupils trust staff and enjoy good relationships with them, which means that staff know the children well and are quick to spot and respond to any concerns. The single central register of staff's suitability to work with children is checked thoroughly by senior staff to assure its accuracy. The governor responsible for overseeing safeguarding arrangements meets with the designated member of staff for safeguarding to check the effectiveness of safeguarding arrangements.

## Inspection findings

- Parents have very mixed views of the school. Some are not happy and understandably concerned when governors were not able to give detailed information about the future leadership of the school. When teachers left and pupils were taught by temporary staff, parents' worries were compounded. Many parents are concerned about the effect of the instability in leadership and are relieved and cautiously optimistic at the arrival of a permanent headteacher. Most of those who responded in writing to Ofsted's questionnaire are happy about the school's provision for their children, often in the classes where there were no changes. Parents new to the school often have no concerns about the school and say that communication between home and school is good.
- Over a fifth of pupils responded to Ofsted's online questionnaire. Almost all of the responses were positive about the school. Of the few negative responses, older pupils wanted more information about what to expect at the high school and about possible career choices. Others wanted to know sooner when their teacher was leaving.
- You and the interim executive headteacher, who led the school prior to your appointment, have turned the school around, regaining the trust and confidence of staff and parents. Not only do staff now have clear and consistent guidance for their teaching but also their good work is recognised and their views taken into consideration. Staff now feel valued in a way that they did not before and are positive about the future.
- The school has had good support from the headteacher of Abbot's Hall Community Primary School. The headteacher led the school as the interim executive headteacher during the spring term of 2016. Staff say there was a smooth handover to you from your predecessor.
- This quick turnaround happened because, in spite of the uncertainty, staff just got on with the business of teaching. They had, and continue to have, great strength in professional support from one another. They are an experienced, proficient group of staff who know what pupils need to learn next. They plan together. They assess pupils' work accurately and frequently. They make good use of professional development, including sharing information from courses or visits to schools, and postgraduate studies in teaching literacy.
- The chair of the governing body, new since September 2015, has a firm handle on the school's strengths and areas for development. Governors bring a range of relevant knowledge and skills but have not had all the information they need to keep a close eye on pupils' performance. This is because senior leaders have not tracked pupils' progress carefully enough in the past.
- The school meets the requirements for specified information on its website.
- The governing body has recently requested that the school become an academy as part of a local multi-academy trust.

- Although there have been weaknesses in the strategic overview of pupils' performance, the tracking of pupils with special educational needs or disability, those known to be entitled to the pupil premium and children in the early years is done well. This is because the staff responsible for overseeing these groups pull the information together effectively. Their tracking shows that most of the pupils with special educational needs or disability and children in the Reception Year achieved well during the 2014/15 academic year and continue to do well this year. In common with other pupils in key stages 1 and 2 last year, the achievement of those known to be eligible for the pupil premium declined. The gap between their performance and that of others is now reducing.
- The most-able pupils are often served well in lessons. In the early years provision, children have extra time to extend their skills, for example to complete a long piece of writing. In other classes, work is often started at a higher level and teachers' feedback provides pupils with that extra challenge to think harder about how to apply what is learned.
- Pupils benefit from the good role models of teachers and support staff. This not only supports their ability to get on with one another, but also means that they can explain what they learn and how to be good learners. For example, teachers often question pupils about their work and drill down to what they mean by their answers. Similarly, teaching is often in contexts that are meaningful and relevant, which helps pupils understand why their learning is important.

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

Leaders and those responsible for governance should ensure that:

- pupils' progress is tracked rigorously and provides a strategic overview that demonstrates clearly whether pupils make good progress from their starting points
- middle leaders play a full part in the strategic monitoring and evaluation of pupils' performance.

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

Yours sincerely

Heather Yaxley  
**Her Majesty's Inspector**

## **Information about the inspection**

During this inspection, I met with you, the interim deputy headteacher, the assistant headteacher who is also the special educational needs coordinator, the chair of the governing body, the governor responsible for overseeing safeguarding arrangements, staff, pupils during lessons, and parents as they brought their children to school. I spoke on the telephone with the local authority adviser linked to the school and the headteacher of Abbot's Hall Community Primary School.

I observed pupils in lessons. I scrutinised documents regarding pupils' performance, the quality of teaching and assessment, and the school's arrangements for safeguarding children. There were 35 staff and 84 pupil responses to Ofsted's questionnaire; 70 parents responded to Parent View during the inspection, and 54 parents, 10 staff and 12 pupils gave written comments.