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Mrs L. Arrowsmith
Head of School
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Dear Mrs Arrowsmith

Short inspection of Hemyock Primary School

Following my visit to the school on 30 June 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. You, staff and governors work closely together to create a vibrant school community. All leaders make a strong contribution to checking and evaluating the work of the school. During our visits to classrooms together, senior leaders were quick to identify strong examples of teaching and learning. Your precise approach to the placement of staff has helped those pupils whose progress had slowed to catch up.

The curriculum motivates and engages pupils. School corridors and classrooms display interesting examples of pupils' work that demonstrate the breadth of topics covered. The quality of pupils' observational art work is particularly high. The curriculum is also successful in developing pupils' positive attitudes towards learning and their good attendance. Typically, pupils are inquisitive about the topics being taught and they respond positively to teachers' questions and guidance. Attendance is strong for all groups of pupils and they play and work together purposefully. Parents who responded to Parent View, Ofsted's online questionnaire, overwhelmingly agree that their children enjoy school and achieve well.

Since the previous inspection, the school has worked hard to improve the quality of assessment practice. The school's agreed approach to providing feedback to pupils is now well established. Pupils say that teachers' comments, both verbal and written, help them to improve their work. You are making good use of your work

with higher education providers and educationalists to implement a new system for assessing pupils' progress and attainment. Teachers are using their clear understanding of pupils' achievements well to tackle gaps in learning and to provide challenge for the most able pupils.

The attainment of middle-ability pupils in mathematics was identified as a weakness in the previous inspection report. You have successfully tackled this aspect of work by raising teachers' expectations of pupils' ability to think and reason in mathematics. Consequently, pupils' attainment is now above the national average. Your school-to-school improvement work with schools in Worcester has led to effective staff training on the use of equipment in mathematics. This has proved successful in supporting pupils' understanding of concepts in mathematics. Pupils' work from the early years through to Year 6 demonstrates that they are now applying their mathematical skills across a range of subjects.

Safeguarding is effective.

Staff are tenacious in their work to keep pupils safe in school. Pupils confirm that they feel safe and they know whom to go to if they have concerns. They say that bullying happens occasionally, but that leaders and teachers are good at sorting it out. The strong partnership with the Primary Academies Trust ensures that leaders with responsibility for safeguarding hold up-to-date qualifications at the required level. Good use is made of the experience and skills of the governing body to challenge and check that staff implement the school's comprehensive safeguarding policies.

Inspection findings

- Leaders and governors have used their checks on the school's performance to identify and tackle areas of weakness. For example, they recognised that writing lagged behind other areas of learning in the early years foundation stage. In response, leaders have implemented a range of strategies to support pupils' early writing skills. Close work with the pre-school, including training together, is helping staff to create the circumstances in which children are ready to write. As a result, pupils are showing greater pencil control and are increasingly keen to start writing. Decisions by the trust and governors to invest in the early years environment and to accompany this with staff training have also contributed to children's higher achievement. Children develop in confidence and ability in this nurturing Reception class.

- Reading is a strength of the school. Pupils develop a good understanding of phonics (the link between letters and sounds). Their reading skills develop quickly and pupils make good use of these skills when investigating the different topics they are learning. Pupils' reading challenge scrap-books are beautifully presented and reflect the breadth of their reading and love of books. The scrap-books develop pupils' reading comprehension skills. Pupils answer questions about the books they have read and produce thoughtful responses with highly decorative illustrations. The standard of work reflects the care pupils take with their scrap-books and the resulting pride they feel in their work. However, the good-quality handwriting seen in these books is sometimes not seen in English books.
- Teachers place great emphasis on developing pupils' speaking and listening skills. Pupils are therefore confident and articulate when presenting their work or reading aloud. Planned activities promote pupils' use of language and develop their vocabulary well. For example, a Year 4 pupil's poem described a fire as 'tiger gold', and in Year 2, in response to 'Lord of the Forest', pupils used their knowledge of words well in the description 'a rushing waterfall falls onto the glistening stones'. Technical accuracy in spelling, punctuation and grammar is not consistent throughout the school. Pupils' spelling is weaker than other technical aspects and this limits the effectiveness of some pupils' writing.
- The leader of special educational needs carefully plans high-quality support for vulnerable pupils with complex needs. Research is used well to inform strategies to help pupils to overcome barriers to their learning. Close work with external agencies provides the school with helpful advice. As a result, pupils who have complex needs work successfully alongside their classmates in lessons. The school is aware that planning and targets for other pupils receiving support are sometimes insufficiently precise to ensure that pupils make even more rapid progress.
- Pupils' overall attendance remains above the national average. Rigorous systems are in place to monitor each pupil's attendance level. Leaders have taken appropriate action to tackle poor attendance through close work with families. As a result, attendance has improved for groups that have had higher absence levels in the past. Disadvantaged pupils' attendance is now in line with that of others in the school. The attendance of pupils who have special educational needs and/or disabilities has also improved.
- The school is very much at the heart of the local community. Parents' comments typically identify the 'great community' and 'approachable staff'. Leaders and governors have tackled positively issues such as local residents' concerns with parking. In doing so, strong partnerships have been built which are securing your long-term vision for the school's building and grounds.

Next steps for the school

Leaders and those responsible for governance should ensure that:

- pupils' technical accuracy in spelling is consistently high throughout the school, in line with the new national curriculum
- as a result of clear and agreed guidelines, pupils' handwriting is consistently neat and well formed in all subjects.

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

Yours sincerely

Tracy Hannon
Her Majesty's Inspector

Information about the inspection

During the inspection, I visited classrooms in order to look at pupils' books and to talk to pupils about their work. These visits were undertaken jointly with senior leaders. I scrutinised a sample of books from pupils across the school. Meetings were held with senior leaders, the chief executive officer for the Primary Academies Trust and the chair of the local governing body. I also had a telephone conversation with the school's improvement adviser. I scrutinised a wide range of documentation, including that relating to safeguarding, and the quality of teaching, the curriculum and assessment. I took account of the responses by parents to Ofsted's online questionnaire, Parent View.