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Dear Mrs Reid

Short inspection of Perryfields Infant School

Following my visit to the school on 20 September 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 2012.

This school continues to be good.

The leadership team has maintained the good quality of education in the school since the last inspection. Despite a significant number of changes to the leadership and structure of the school, Perryfields Infant School remains a very exciting place for children to learn. It is underpinned by the school's strong ethos and core values. Your effective leadership is highly respected by staff, parents and governors. This contributes to the positive and purposeful relationships seen across the school.

You took up position in 2014, having been the deputy headteacher for the previous two years. The substantive deputy headteacher has been in place for two years and is currently on maternity leave. There is therefore an acting deputy headteacher who has been in post since February 2016. Both leads for English and mathematics are new to post. There have been changes in membership of the governing body. All governors are new with the exception of one. On 1 September you appointed a home-school liaison worker. You also adopted a new system of key workers to support a growing number of children with additional needs in September 2015. The school was asked by the local authority to accommodate a growing number of children in the community. In 2013/14, 77 children joined three Reception classes. These pupils have just moved into the junior school and the infant school has reverted to two Reception classes. Despite these challenges, you have created a stable school community.

Much has been achieved since the previous inspection. You have focused on identified priorities from the 2012 inspection and have taken effective action to

address them. Attainment at the end of key stage 1 continues to be significantly above the national average in reading, writing and mathematics. You were asked to increase the proportion of pupils reaching the higher levels in mathematics. In 2015, 50% of pupils achieved higher levels. In some classes, teachers constantly challenge the most able pupils, which was also an area for development. The levels of challenge are not yet consistent across the school but this is improving. Your vision and passion for improving the learning experiences of every individual member of staff is very evident. You have developed subject leaders' skills effectively so that they are better able to improve teaching in their areas.

Pupils are enthusiastic, hard-working, confident and articulate. In the words of one, they 'definitely like coming to school'. They talk with pride about their work and share their thinking with other pupils. They work well together in lessons and some are developing a good level of independence. Teachers have ensured that their classroom environment supports pupils in their learning. During my visit I observed many pupils who were using numbers or words displayed around the class to help them with their writing or mathematics. This is clearly something they are used to, and, should pupils forget to use these prompts, others will helpfully remind them.

The early years is a strength of the school because of the work that you have undertaken and the effective leadership of this area. As a result, children get a very good start to their school life. The proportion of children who have historically entered the Reception classes with skills below those typical for their age is high. However, the leader of the early years has worked hard during the last year to support children's learning prior to entering the school. From the beginning of the school's relationship with parents, staff plan opportunities for parents to work with the school to support their children's learning. Coupled with this initiative, home visits and effective liaison with nurseries and pre-schools have ensured that a large majority of children who entered Reception in September 2016 now have skills and abilities that are expected for their age. Despite my visit coinciding with it being only the second full day in the Reception classes, children were settled very well. All adults work well with individuals and groups, and learning is planned both inside and outside of the classroom to ensure that children make good progress in all areas of their learning. As a consequence, children leave Reception well prepared for the challenges of Year 1. The proportion of children achieving a good level of development at the end of Reception since the previous inspection is at least at, if not above, the national average.

Pupils achieve well in reading. The proportion of pupils who achieved the expected standard in the Year 1 phonics check is above the national average. During my visit I listened to many pupils read. They use their phonics skills well and show an enjoyment of reading from an early age. What is more, pupils make good use of their phonics skills in their writing and, as a result, their spelling is developing well. Through effective self-evaluation, you have identified that you need to further develop pupils' comprehension skills. This will undoubtedly benefit all pupils and, in particular, the most able.

There are some areas for improvement, of which you are aware. Leaders have not focused tightly enough on ensuring that all groups of pupils make the best progress

they can from their varying starting points and in all subjects. Most-able pupils, for example, do not achieve what they are capable of; they told me that they would like more challenge in their English and mathematics lessons. Some parents, who responded to Ofsted's survey, Parent View, also say that their children 'are not stretched' as much as they might be. You have taken steps to involve pupils in determining the way their school continues to improve. In the pupil action plan, pupils identified that they would like to get better at their learning and 'work more independently'. You and your leaders have already begun to put planning in place across the curriculum to help pupils learn more independently. However, you recognise that the fruits of your labour will only be more evident as this becomes more consistent in all classes.

You have shared with senior leaders your detailed improvement plan that identifies areas for development. However, there are no clear timelines for checking on the impact of actions you have taken on pupils' progress. The school's assessment system is used well to ensure that all staff have an accurate view of the attainment of pupils. However, the tracking of pupils' progress is not as rigorous. You have recently put in place targets for each child so that their progress can be tracked and action taken should individuals not achieve what is expected of them. The provision for pupils who have special educational needs and/or disabilities, and those who are disadvantaged is very effective. As a result, pupils make good progress both academically and socially.

Governors, many of whom are new to their roles, have an accurate view of what is working well and what could be even better; for example their regular monitoring of pupils' progress. They hold school leaders to account well for pupils' attainment and recognise that their monitoring of pupils' progress must be more regular. Governors are committed and dedicated to ensuring that they fulfil their statutory duties. They visit the school regularly to report on such aspects as the checks leaders make on the suitability of staff to work with children.

Safeguarding is effective.

The school's safeguarding policies and procedures meet current requirements. Recording systems are fully in place for the recruitment of staff. Governors are rigorous in ensuring that the necessary recruitment checks have been effectively carried out. Documents are meticulously kept.

Leaders and governors ensure that staff are well informed about new guidance including, for example, the 'Prevent' duty. Staff and governors receive regular training. The information on the school's website is compliant, although some is awaiting review and updates.

Parents overwhelmingly agree that their children are kept safe in the school. Pupils are confident that the adults at school will deal well with conflict or any potential bullying situations should they ever arise. There is good awareness of the risks to pupils when using computers.

Inspection findings

- At the last inspection, inspectors praised the school for many aspects of its work, especially regarding pupils' behaviour. This work has been maintained and remains a strength, as is the provision of pupils' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development. Pupils are engaged in their learning and are keen to learn. The positive relationships that are evident throughout the school reflect the responses of staff to the online questionnaire. They are proud to work at the school and agree that the school is well led and managed.
- Pupils who have special educational needs and/or disabilities receive the support and guidance they need to remove barriers to their learning both personally and academically. The few disadvantaged pupils receive personal and thoughtful provision so that they can make good progress from their varying starting points. The governors understand how the additional money is used.
- In lessons, teachers provide pupils with interesting and stimulating topics so they can practise their skills. For example, pupils were beginning a topic on homes and were excitedly guessing where each item that the teacher revealed from a sack might be found in their home. Through probing questions, pupils were not only encouraged to think about their own home, but also that of others. When asked what they would like to find out about to do with homes, one pupil said, 'I would like to know what it feels like to move house'. This type of response is typical of pupils in Perryfields. They are constantly encouraged to think about others, this term's core value being 'thoughtfulness'.
- You have an accurate view of the school's strengths and weaknesses. Consequently, you have appropriate action plans in place that you continue to evaluate against pupils' outcomes. However, the regularity with which you check the effectiveness of actions taken, and the impact this is having on pupils' progress is not clear.
- In the early years, children get a very good start to their school career. They are well cared for and happy in a safe and secure environment. You and your leaders have secured very effective links with parents, pre-schools and nurseries and, as a result, children are more 'school-ready' this year. Adults effectively provide for children's social and emotional needs and know the children very well. As a result, the high levels of achievement in the early years are set to continue.
- You are developing pupils' independence in a variety of ways. Pupils are very proud of the additional roles they have as, for example, play leaders, school council members or junior librarians. The role they wish to play in determining how the school continues to improve is clear from their action plan.
- Pupils are very positive about their school, which they say is, 'welcoming, fun and exciting'. They are enthusiastic about the opportunities you offer in terms of extra-curricular activities. Opportunities such as the pear drops pre- and after-school club are very well attended. You have secured attendance at these clubs for some of the most vulnerable pupils. As a result, their

attendance and punctuality are good.

- Parents are very supportive of the school and its leaders. A high proportion responded to Parent View and were overwhelming positive about many aspects of the school's work. One parent said: 'Perryfields Infants is a lovely school, very supportive and very caring for all the children who attend'. This is but one of many, and typifies the responses.
- You and your teachers use your developing assessment system regularly to ensure that you identify individuals who are at risk of falling behind in their learning. You are aware that this system is not yet fine-tuned enough to ensure that all pupils make the most progress that they can – in particular, the most able pupils. Checking work in pupils' books is conducted regularly. Better use should be made of this valuable piece of information in highlighting pupils who may not be falling behind, but who are not making the progress they can.
- Many leaders are new to post, particularly those in core subjects like English and mathematics. Regular checking on the impact of actions they have taken is still developing, as is ensuring the good progress of all pupils, and in particular the most able pupils.
- The governors are committed and dedicated to ensuring the continued success of Perryfields Infant School. They visit the school frequently to assure themselves that the information they receive is appropriate. The minutes of their meetings demonstrate that they ask challenging questions of school leaders. They hold leaders to account for pupils' attainment and the progress the school is making in its development.

Next steps for the school

Leaders and those responsible for governance should ensure that:

- teachers make more regular and effective checks on the progress of pupils from their varying starting points
- the most able pupils work more independently and are challenged in their learning
- improvement planning is tightly focused on tracking and monitoring of pupils' progress.

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

Yours sincerely

Ruth Brock
Her Majesty's Inspector

Information about the inspection

During the inspection, I met with you, your senior leaders, four governors, including the chair of the governing body, and a representative from the local authority. I jointly observed learning in all classes with you. I spent time speaking formally and informally with pupils and observed them at play and during lunchtime. I listened to pupils read in their lessons and spoke to them about their enjoyment of reading. I reviewed school documents about safeguarding, including the record of checks on the suitability of each member of staff to work with young people, pupils' attendance, school self-evaluation and improvement plans. One hundred and fifteen responses to the online questionnaire, Parent View, were considered, including free text responses. I considered the views of the four members of staff who responded to Ofsted's online questionnaires.