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Mrs Emma Mercer
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Dear Mrs Mercer

Short inspection of Clipston Endowed Voluntary Controlled Primary 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 January 2012.

This school continues to be good.

The leadership team has maintained the good quality of education in the school since the last inspection. Outcomes at the end of Year 6 for all subjects have been above the national average in most years since the last inspection. In 2015, however, outcomes fell in all subjects to below the national average. Leaders have taken action to deal with this. The proportion of pupils who attained the expected standard in reading, writing and mathematics in 2016 at the end of Year 6 was just above the national average.

You, the teachers and the governing body have an accurate view of the school's strengths and areas for improvement. Moreover, you have put your plans into action effectively. Last year, the school focused on developing pupils' enjoyment of reading. Teachers encouraged pupils to participate in 'book talk', so that the pupils could articulate their thoughts about a book and share ideas. In addition, you created a reading area in the school and used more books to inspire pupils to read. The proportion of pupils who met the expected standard in reading by the end of Year 6 in 2016 was much higher than the national average.

Pupils enjoy school and are enthusiastic, keen to learn and willing to share their ideas. Following a Roald Dahl week, pupils in Years 5 and 6 were observed writing high-quality sentences in the style of Roald Dahl after reading 'Charlie and the Chocolate Factory'. One boy, using good sentence structure, wrote, 'Although

Charlie's mouth was fizzing with loveliness, his heart sank... he hadn't won the golden ticket.' The pupils respond equally well to other topics they study. For example, pupils spoke positively about their visit to Holdenby House as part of their second world war topic. They were very interested to learn how wounds were treated.

At the previous inspection, the inspector asked you to help parents and carers contribute to their children's learning by explaining how the homework relates to the learning in class. Consequently, in pupils' homework books, teachers provide a summary of what has been taught during the week and parents and pupils have an opportunity to comment on the homework for the teachers to read. This routine is established across the school. Most parents who responded to Parent View think that their children receive appropriate homework for their age.

You evaluate the quality of the school's work accurately. For example, you have identified that the outcomes in the early years were not as high as they should be. You have taken action to improve the provision, but it is too early to judge the impact of these actions.

Outcomes in mathematics at the end of key stage 1 in 2015 were below the national average. In 2016, the very large majority of pupils in Year 2 did meet the new expected standard in mathematics. Nevertheless, you have identified that the level of challenge for the most able pupils in key stage 1 is not high enough in their mathematics work. Recently, pupils have been set more challenging work, although this is not done consistently. I have asked you to ensure that pupils in key stage 2 become more fluent in standard written calculations to improve their mathematical ability.

Safeguarding is effective.

You lead safeguarding effectively. All members of staff have read the latest government documentation concerning safeguarding requirements. The checks that you have made on the suitability of staff to work with children are up to date. The governing body ensures that safeguarding is discussed at every meeting. It reviews risk assessments for the site to ensure that pupils are safe at school.

The school's safeguarding records are detailed and securely stored. You work well with a range of agencies. You are not afraid to challenge the responses of the agencies, if you feel that they are not taking the appropriate action. Consequently, pupils benefit from good support to promote their social and emotional well-being.

You monitor pupils' attendance closely. If there is a concern, parents are informed quickly. Following contact with parents, the pupils' attendance improves. The latest attendance figure for all pupils last year was above the most recent national average. The attendance for disadvantaged pupils was, however, below that of non-disadvantaged pupils nationally. You took action to improve the attendance of this group of pupils during the last academic year and, consequently, no disadvantaged pupils were persistently absent.

Inspection findings

- You lead the school well. You set out clear actions within the school improvement plan, which are monitored closely by the governing body.
- The governing body questions leaders regularly about the progress of different groups of pupils, including the disadvantaged and the most able pupils. It compares how well the school is achieving in relation to national benchmarks.
- The governing body's visits to school are focused on school improvement priorities. Its findings are reported back to the standards committee. This close scrutiny helps school leaders to improve outcomes.
- Outcomes at the end of key stage 2 fell in 2015, particularly in mathematics and reading. There was a high proportion of pupils who had special educational needs and/or disabilities in that cohort. I cannot comment on their progress because it could identify individual pupils.
- Your systems for checking on the quality of teaching are good. The quality of teaching is improving.
- Subject leaders check on the quality of teaching rigorously. They are well informed about the strengths and weaknesses in their subjects. Consequently, the actions that they take to raise standards in their subjects are the right ones and have helped to raise standards.
- You have successfully improved the quality of pupils' writing in Years 1 to 6. Teachers have used real books and drama to inspire the pupils to write. In Year 2, I observed pupils being encouraged to expand their vocabulary and use less common words, such as 'lumbering', 'intelligent' and 'mysterious', to describe characters in their stories. In Years 3 and 4, pupils were encouraged to write at length and to use paragraphs effectively to structure their writing.
- Most pupils punctuate their sentences well. The most able pupils use a range of punctuation marks in their writing. However, sometimes, some pupils, including the most able, misspell words that they should be able to spell correctly. The teachers have recognised this problem and the leader for English has changed the way that the school teaches spelling. There is now more focus on the rules of spelling.
- Following the introduction of the new national curriculum, you changed the mathematics curriculum to include more problem-solving and reasoning questions. This has provided a good level of challenge for the most able pupils in key stage 2. For example, in Year 6, pupils were asked to split a rectangular garden into regions using different numbers of straight lines. Using their answers, pupils wrote an algebraic expression to represent the pattern.
- Scrutiny of pupils' books shows that opportunities are given to pupils regularly to extend their mathematical thinking and understanding.

- Some less-able and most-able pupils are not always competent in written calculations. Teachers, sometimes, do not correct pupils' misconceptions quickly enough and pupils do not have enough opportunities to practise written calculations. As a result, some pupils do not achieve as well as they could in mathematics.
- In addition, the most able pupils in Years 1 and 2 are not challenged sufficiently to deepen their thinking in mathematics. For example, when pupils were asked to record different measurements for capacity, the scale that they used remained the same for every question. Also, the pupils were not challenged to use their mathematical knowledge well enough to solve problems.
- The teaching of phonics is very good. In lessons, pupils sound out letters, practise writing the letter shapes in the air and are encouraged to use their phonics when reading. Last year, all pupils passed the phonics screening check in Year 1 and all pupils who took the retest in Year 2 also passed.
- The most able pupils are fluent readers and read with expression. Pupils enjoy reading, both at home and school. They can name authors of books that they particularly like to read.
- Last year, only half of the children reached a good level of development, which was below the national average for 2015. Consequently, some children were not well prepared for key stage 1, particularly with their writing skills.
- You have taken action to improve outcomes in the early years. The new early years leader visited other schools recommended by the local authority to find out how children may be assessed correctly. She has used what she found out to carry out detailed assessments of the early learning goals. These assessments are being used to plan the children's next steps in their learning.
- The most able children in the early years are being challenged in mathematics, for example, by counting and sorting balls on a washing line beyond 10. Parents of Reception Year children spoke positively about how well their children have settled into school.
- Leaders monitor closely the progress of disadvantaged pupils and tailor support to meet the pupils' individual needs. Through the school this group of pupils made good progress, particularly in reading and mathematics.
- The school has a detailed plan which sets out all of the support available for pupils who have special educational needs and/or disabilities. The pupils' progress is closely checked at pupil progress meetings to ensure that they are making good progress.
- The school has a range of extra-curricular activities for pupils to participate in. The gardening club is very successful, growing crops and making and selling soup to parents. The school council and eco committee run stalls at the Christmas bazaar and spend the money that they raise. This enables pupils to get a good understanding of enterprise.

- Pupils are prepared for life in modern Britain. They have the opportunity to visit another school in Leicester, where there are pupils from different backgrounds and cultures. This provides an opportunity for the pupils to see how festivals, such as Eid or Diwali, are celebrated and to gain a better understanding of life in modern Britain and the wider world.
- Last year, all key stage 2 pupils visited a careers fair in London to learn about different jobs and the skills needed for those jobs. This informed and inspired them and helped to raise their aspirations for the future.
- The very large majority of parents who responded to Parent View, Ofsted's online questionnaire, were very positive about the school and would recommend the school to other parents. Parents who spoke to the inspector commented on how approachable the teachers are and on how friendly the school is.

Next steps for the school

Leaders and those responsible for governance should ensure that:

- outcomes in the early years improve to ensure that more children are better prepared for the key stage 1 curriculum by ensuring that assessments inform planning to ensure that children make rapid progress
- the most able pupils in key stage 1 are challenged more than they are currently, by giving them more opportunities to develop their mathematical reasoning and problem-solving skills
- pupils in key stage 2, particularly the less able and the most able, become more competent in standard written calculation methods.

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

Yours sincerely

Martin Finch
Her Majesty's Inspector

Information about the inspection

During the inspection, I met you, the senior teacher and the leaders of English, the early years and mathematics. I spoke with parents and observed pupils at breaktime. I visited all classrooms and looked at pupils' current work and work from the previous academic year. I met with two governors, including the chair of the governing body. I listened to pupils read and met with a group of pupils. You and I reviewed records about attendance and keeping children safe. I studied your school improvement plan, your self-evaluation and minutes of governing body meetings. I

looked at your documents relating to teachers' performance. The school meets requirements on the publication of specified information on its website. I considered the 24 responses to Parent View, the 16 responses to the Ofsted free-text service and the two responses to the staff survey. The key lines of enquiry for this inspection focused on:

- the standard of provision in the early years
- why more pupils had not achieved the higher levels at the end of both key stages 1 and 2
- how the school was promoting reading
- how effective the school's safeguarding arrangements are.