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Mrs Rachel Simmons
Headteacher
John Clare Primary School
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Dear Mrs Simmons

Short inspection of John Clare Primary School

Following my visit to the school on 19 October 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.

You have worked effectively, with other school leaders and governors, to maintain the good quality of education in the school since the last inspection. Despite significant changes to the teaching staff over the past 18 months, John Clare Primary School remains an exciting place for pupils to learn. The school is at the heart of the local community. It is rightly popular, and regularly over-subscribed. Your effective leadership is valued by staff, parents and governors, and has helped to create a positive, nurturing ethos which underpins all aspects of the school's work.

Parents are highly supportive of the school and value both the quality of teaching and the wide range of enrichment activities and clubs which are available to pupils. A high percentage of parents responded to Ofsted's online questionnaire, Parent View, with an overwhelming majority saying that their children are well looked after and well taught. A typical response was, 'Our children are thriving and progressing incredibly well academically, personally and socially. The ethos of the school can be seen in everything that staff do.'

You have dealt effectively with most of the areas for improvement that were identified at the previous inspection. This has resulted in improvements to the quality of teaching, learning and assessment. In 2016, pupils achieved well in reading, writing and mathematics. However, there are still some aspects that require further work – for example, improvements are required in science, geography and history. Nevertheless, you have effective plans in place to build on

the school's success and ensure that pupils achieve well in subjects across the whole curriculum.

Safeguarding is effective.

Arrangements for the safeguarding of pupils are given a suitably high priority. Staff are trained at an appropriate level and governors know their duties and are vigilant in the checks that they make. Pupils say that they feel safe in school. Those spoken to during this inspection had a good understanding of how to stay safe while using the internet. Bullying is extremely rare at the school. Parents and pupils expressed confidence in the school's staff to deal effectively with any poor behaviour and ensure that pupils enjoy their schooldays.

Inspection findings

- Children get off to a flying start in the Reception class. Highly effective systems are in place to ensure that children have a smooth transition into full-time education. Staff develop good relationships with parents during the summer term through home visits and meetings in school. This strong partnership means that staff know children well when they start in the Reception class, and have a good idea of their abilities and interests. In addition, teachers are quickly able to provide a wide range of exciting activities for children which build well on their skills and abilities. In 2016, the proportion of children who achieved a good level of development by the end of the Reception Year was above the national average. This means that children are well prepared for the challenges of Year 1.
- Pupils say that they enjoy school. Overall, they have positive attitudes to learning and take pride in wearing their uniform. They are punctual and attend school regularly. Attendance is above the national average, and in 2015 no pupils were persistently absent from school. However, pupils do not always show their good attitudes to learning in the way that they present their work. Too often they fail to take enough care with their handwriting, and their presentation does not reflect the high-quality work that many pupils produce.
- Reading is a strength of the school. By the time that they reach the end of key stage 1, most pupils are proficient in reading, including the least and most able readers, and have developed a keen interest in reading. Older pupils read widely and often. Those spoken to during this inspection had a broad knowledge of children's authors and were confident and competent readers. The standards that were achieved at the end of Year 6 in 2016 reflect the school's successful approach to developing this key skill.
- Pupils learn well in mathematics. They are provided with good levels of challenge in the early years and in Year 1. In 2016, at the end of key stage 1, attainment was above the national average. Pupils make good progress across key stage 2. The work seen in pupils' books shows that they are regularly provided with effective opportunities to use and apply their mathematical skills and knowledge to investigate and solve problems.

- The most able pupils generally make good progress and achieve well, particularly in mathematics and reading. Many of these pupils also excel at sport and in the arts. However, the progress that the most able make in writing is not as strong. This was reflected in pupils' written work, particularly in geography and history where too few opportunities are provided for pupils to write and demonstrate what they have learned.
- Pupils are given the opportunity to study a wide range of subjects at John Clare. The arts have a particularly high status at the school. There are many good examples of pupils' art work displayed in classrooms and corridors around the school. The school also organises art exhibitions and coordinates choral and dance events for local schools. Pupils can study four languages at key stage 2, including Latin. Some pupils in Years 5 and 6 showed a good understanding of the differences in grammatical structure between different languages during discussions with the inspector.
- Pupils behave extremely well, both in class and at breaktimes. They work effectively in lessons and are respectful to each other and the adults who teach them. Older pupils enjoy the responsibilities that they are given, for example as librarians, play leaders or as school council representatives. All pupils in Year 6 have a 'buddy' in the Reception class. They write to them, before they start in September, and look out for them once they have started at the school, often reading with them and sharing work. One parent wrote on Parent View, 'The "buddy system" has meant that my daughter has someone to look after her and guide her through the start of school and also made her feel secure.'
- Pupils have many learning opportunities outside the classroom to develop further interests and enthusiasms. There are regular educational visits, which support pupils' learning in geography and history. There is also an annual residential visit for pupils in Years 5 and 6. Over 30 pupils attend the chess club and a similar number sing in the choir. A boys' singing group is also popular. Tuition is provided for pupils learning guitar, piano, drums, ukulele and woodwind instruments. Pupils also have many opportunities to learn and play a range of sports, including hockey, football and cricket. They regularly take part in competitive sports with other schools.
- The governing body is ambitious for the school to become outstanding. Governors are highly committed to the school and visit regularly to see for themselves how effectively policies and procedures are carried out. They bring a high degree of support and challenge to the school's leaders. Governors understand their responsibilities and carry them out effectively. They regularly review the school's policies and procedures including those related to safeguarding.
- The local authority rightly provides light-touch support to this good school. It provides the school with valuable staff training, and support for leaders in evaluating the school's performance and identifying areas for development.

Next steps for the school

Leaders and governors should ensure that:

- improvements are made to the quality of teaching, learning and assessment in science
- teachers have higher expectations of pupils' written work in geography and history
- pupils' handwriting and presentation skills are improved and more closely reflect the high standards being achieved.

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

Yours sincerely

Paul Tomkow
Her Majesty's Inspector

Information about the inspection

During the inspection, I met with you, the deputy headteacher and the early years leader. I particularly focused on the quality of teaching across the school, pupils' progress in writing, particularly the most able, and middle leaders' contribution to improvements in the wider curriculum. I met with the chair and three other governors. I visited classrooms with you to speak to pupils about their work and observe teaching and learning. I also took the opportunity to listen to several pupils read. I observed pupils' behaviour in and around the school. I talked to parents at the beginning of the day, considered the 37 responses to Parent View, and the free-text responses submitted by parents. I also scrutinised the responses from staff and pupils to Ofsted's online questionnaires. I looked at a wide range of documentation, including your self-evaluation, the school improvement plan and information about the progress and achievement of pupils. The safeguarding policy, the single central record of staff checks, and other records and procedures to keep pupils safe were also scrutinised.