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Mr Christopher Aitken  
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Dear Mr Aitken

### **Short inspection of Horning Community Primary School**

Following my visit to the school on 9 November 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 March 2012.

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

In 2015 the school federated with Cantley Primary School. The two schools share a governing body and you are headteacher of both schools. You and your team, with strong support from governors, recognised that standards had declined over the past few years. You were united in your determination to restore the good standard of education that had previously prevailed at the school. Consequently, you have taken rapid action to identify where teaching has not been good enough and put in place effective strategies for improvement. This has resulted in some staff leaving and you have been successful in recruiting new replacement staff. Your actions have resulted in the attainment of pupils in reading, writing and mathematics at the end of key stage 2 in 2016 improving to be above the national average.

You have drawn on expertise from the partner school to model effective teaching. For example, the Reception teacher from the partner school worked with staff at Horning last year to improve provision for early years. You have re-written staff job descriptions and reorganised staffing across the school so that pupils are well supported. A new leader for special educational needs has been appointed, who is shared with the partner school. This has resulted in a significant improvement in standards.

Alongside this, you have ensured that Horning Primary School maintains its own distinctive identity and ethos. Parents told me that they value the warmth and

friendly atmosphere of the school. You or your senior teacher welcome pupils and parents each day and so know everyone well. Pupils told me that, 'Mr Aitken is often in our classes, helping someone with their work.' Pupils spoke with genuine warmth about the support provided by their teachers, one pupil saying, 'teachers think we are excellent.' This is because you model regularly how you want all pupils to be treated in school. One pupil said, 'we all have a chance to shine.' The positive relationships between pupils and adults was demonstrated during the inspection when some pupils requested an opportunity to perform for you and some staff. They sang a song they had written during lunchtimes and did so with enthusiasm and confidence, secure in the knowledge that adults would welcome their performance.

The previous inspection report identified that better information and advice should be provided to parents and carers. You have set up systems to keep parents up to date with school events. These include regular newsletters and letters, and use of social media and the school's new website. However, a few parents still say that sometimes letters are not as clear as they could be, and they would appreciate earlier notice of school events.

Many parents spoken to during the inspection, and who responded to Ofsted's online questionnaire, spoke highly of the school. For example, one parent commented on the 'remarkable improvements' made to the school and another on the 'exceptional' teachers. This matches the most recent survey carried out by governors where respondents were also positive about the school. However, a small number of parents who completed the Ofsted online questionnaire were less positive and do not fully support leaders in the changes that have been introduced. This is because governors have not done enough to ensure that all parents recognise and understand fully the reasons for changes that have taken place. They have not checked thoroughly enough that parents feel that they receive sufficient and accurate information about the work of the school.

You and your team have ensured that there is a broad and interesting curriculum in place. Pupils spoke with enthusiasm about events such as 'pirate day'. They were equally enthusiastic about lessons. One pupil spoke about computing where they had created their own games around their topic of the Egyptians. Another recalled a science investigation which involved them in finding out 'who stole the laptop?' by exploring light and shadows. As a result, pupils enjoy learning and want to come to school. One parent wrote, 'my child does not want to lose a minute of school.'

### **Safeguarding is effective.**

You provide regular training for all staff to ensure that they understand what to look for when faced with a potential safeguarding concern. When you became headteacher you identified that records of concerns about pupils were kept but not in a systematic or organised way. You have rectified this and ensure that all concerns are recorded and tracked carefully. Where necessary these are followed up rigorously so that pupils are kept safe. Checks on staff are carried out in line with requirements. A few administrative errors on the single central register were

identified and rectified during the inspection. Pupils say that they feel extremely safe in school and that bullying is very rare. They said that there is always an adult to speak to if they are worried about anything.

### **Inspection findings**

- Significant improvements in pupil outcomes have taken place at the school over the past year because you have quickly identified what needs to be done and have set about ensuring all teaching is good.
- The proportion of children who achieved a good level of development by the end of their Reception Year had been very low. This improved last year and is set to be significantly higher this year. This is because you have improved the provision for Reception pupils. Adults who work in Class 1 skilfully balance the use of their time in this class with Reception, Year 1 and Year 2 pupils. They carefully plan tasks which will move learning on quickly.
- Children in Reception are given good opportunities to work and play indoors and outdoors. They are encouraged to think about their own learning. For example, the class teacher meets with each child weekly to talk with them about what they think they need to learn over the coming week. Children are carefully assessed and their progress tracked, now using an online system. Parents can both access and contribute to this, and many welcome the opportunity to find out what their child has been learning. They also add their own comments and photographs to show what their children learn and can do at home.
- Pupils are also doing better in all other year groups in English and mathematics because you are ensuring that each teacher carefully tracks the progress of each child. You meet with each teacher every half term to review pupils' progress, and talk about what else can be done for any pupil who is not making the rapid progress that you expect. This has been effective, as shown by the above-average proportion of pupils who achieved the new and more challenging expected standard at the end of Year 6 in reading, writing and mathematics. You have ensured that pupils are given greater challenge in these lessons so that more pupils are on track to exceed the standard expected by the end of year 6. This is evident, for example in the support and challenge provided for the most able readers. These pupils are provided with texts and tasks which stimulate their appetite for reading and develop their skills such as inference and empathy.
- In your first year as headteacher you have focused most closely on improving achievement in the core subjects of English and mathematics. You recognise that in other subjects, such as history and geography, the most able pupils are not always challenged sufficiently. This is because they are not given enough tasks to extend their thinking and learning. You have introduced a new system for leadership of these subjects with teachers working in development groups across the federation. However, this system is new and it is yet to have a significant impact on ensuring that all pupils make as rapid progress in these subjects as in English and mathematics.
- Disadvantaged pupils are making good progress in all year groups and many are making better than expected progress. This is because support is carefully planned and provided. For example, pupils have access to emotional support

through the school's on-site counselling provision. Additional one-to-one support is provided to address underperformance. This year you are providing specific support for the most able disadvantaged pupils through special weekly mathematics and English groups with pupils from the partner school. Each pupil progress meeting looks carefully at what else can be put in place to ensure rapid progress for any disadvantaged pupil. As a result, disadvantaged pupils achieve well in Horning Primary School.

- Pupils who have special educational needs and/or disabilities make good progress. The new leader for special educational needs has put in place a range of systems to ensure pupils' needs are met. Pupils are carefully assessed using a range of tools when a teacher has concerns about their learning. Plans are put in place, and adults carefully check that these are having an impact. The special educational needs leader provides good support for adults so that they can tailor lessons most closely to pupils' needs.
- Pupils behave well in school. In lessons and around the school, pupils are very polite and sensible. This is because they know what is expected of them by adults. Good behaviour and attitudes are reinforced in many ways. For example, pupils are highly motivated to receive house points and the headteacher's award for good work or particularly helpful behaviour. Pupils also spoke about the 'bucket fillers' where they receive notes from adults and other pupils commenting on their good work, and 'pompoms' recognising particular successes. These are then collected towards an end of term event or prize.
- Parents spoke about how well older and younger pupils work and play together, and the positive impact this has on pupils' social development. Pupils' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development is promoted in assemblies and through lessons. For example, pupils told me that they had been learning about homeless people. They spoke with empathy about what they had learned, and reflected on their own lives. One pupil said, 'we often take for granted everything we've got and still want more, but this made me think how lucky we are.'

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

Leaders and those responsible for governance should ensure that:

- the most able pupils are provided with more challenging opportunities for learning in some subjects such as history and geography
- the newly introduced system for leadership of subjects other than English and mathematics has a greater impact on improving pupils' progress
- governors check more thoroughly the information provided to parents and ensure it enables them to understand the many improvements that have taken place at the school.

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

Yours sincerely

Maria Curry  
**Her Majesty's Inspector**

### **Information about the inspection**

During the inspection, meetings were held with you and the school's senior teacher. I met with three governors and with a small number of pupils from Years 4, 5 and 6. I heard a sample of pupils read. I scrutinised a range of documents, including information on pupils' progress, safeguarding, development planning and the school's self-evaluation. I visited all classes and evaluated pupils' work. I evaluated the school's website and found it to meet requirements on the publication of specified information.

I focused particularly on whether current pupils are sustaining the level of achievement made by pupils last year, the progress made by disadvantaged pupils, how well leaders have improved communication with parents and how the school keeps pupils safe.