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Mrs Christine Mead
Headteacher
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Dear Mrs Mead

Short inspection of Colby Primary School

Following my visit to the school on 13 December 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 previous inspection. As headteacher, you have ensured that your vision for Colby Primary School as one where 'Everyone learns, everyone leads and everyone matters' shapes the direction of the school as it continues to improve in many ways. Your commitment to maintaining high standards is reflected in the outcomes in English and mathematics achieved at the end of Year 2 and Year 6, which have continued to be above national averages year on year.

Governors provide a high level of support for you and the staff. They know the school well because they visit regularly. The chair of governors makes a point of being on the playground each week for parents to speak to and then comes in to school to see classes at work. Governors have specific allocated responsibilities linked to the school's development plan. They take their responsibilities very seriously, ensuring that they carry out checks and gather information needed to help them make informed decisions, such as how specific funding for promoting sports and supporting disadvantaged pupils is allocated.

Colby Primary School is a very happy place where adults and pupils enjoy working and learning. Staff who responded to the Ofsted online questionnaire said that they respect you and feel respected by you. They know that their views are listened to and really matter, and that they are supported in their professional development. This has contributed to the stability of staffing over the past few years.

Pupils also enjoy school. Those I spoke to during the inspection were unanimous in their praise for the school. They said that they are given 'lots of freedom' at the school but alongside this, are expected to 'work hard and play hard'. Comments such as 'teachers make learning fun' and 'we get to come up with things we want to do' were typical of those made by pupils about their school.

A key strength of the school is the promotion of pupils' personal development. Pupils are given a wide range of opportunities to develop their social skills, for example through older pupils working with younger ones as buddies when children first start in Reception. The school's house system ensures that pupils across the age ranges get to know each other and take part in a range of different events. Pupils are given many leadership roles in school, for example as 'tiny teachers' and 'events leaders'. Pupils take care of the school's chickens and guinea pigs, and carry out a range of other jobs around the school and in the school garden. As a result, pupils learn about responsibility and are exceptionally well supported in their development into caring and sensible citizens.

Parents are highly supportive of the school, seeing themselves as partners in learning. They play an active role in the school, supporting events and making suggestions about how the school could improve further. Parents who responded to the Ofsted online questionnaire and those I spoke to were highly complimentary of your leadership and of the staff, making comments such as 'the leadership of the school is exceptional' and 'the staff are professional but remain friendly and approachable'. Parents particularly value the wider curriculum offered by the school. A few parents would welcome more information about the progress their child is making in school. Parents' positive attitudes towards the school are demonstrated by the fact that every parent who responded to the Ofsted online questionnaire said that they would recommend the school to another parent.

Safeguarding is effective.

You and the whole staff are highly committed to ensuring that pupils are kept safe. You ensure that all necessary checks on staff employed at the school are carried out and you double-check that everything is correctly recorded so that nothing is missed. You maintain careful records of any concerns about pupils, ensuring that action is taken swiftly and liaising with outside agencies when needed. Staff training is kept up to date, with regular additional updates carried out when any new information needs to be provided. Concerns forms seen during the inspection demonstrate that this training is effective because these show that staff know the signs to look for that may indicate that a child is at risk of harm.

Pupils told me that the school is a safe place to be and parents agree that this is the case. Pupils know about how to keep themselves safe, including when using technology such as the internet because this is regularly taught in school. Events such as 'anti-bullying week' ensure that pupils know what bullying is and what to do if they are being bullied. They also said that if they had a worry they could use the school 'worry box' and someone would help. Pupils said that bullying and discriminatory behaviour is extremely rare at the school but that any incidents are dealt with very effectively by adults.

Inspection findings

- Inspection evidence shows that the quality of writing is strong across the school. Pupils are given lots of opportunities to write for meaningful purposes so that their writing is of a good standard. For example, during the inspection, pupils collected leaves from the school garden and made their own 'leaf man' as a starting point for a piece of descriptive writing. This ensured that pupils were enthusiastic about their writing and this was reflected in the work that they produced.
- Pupils make good progress in reading. You identified that pupil outcomes in the Year 1 phonics assessments were too low and so have put in place new programmes to develop pupils' knowledge of phonics. This has been effective in increasing the proportion of pupils who achieved the expected standard. Alongside this, you have maintained a strong focus on developing a love of reading. In one class, pupils during the inspection were given time to read their books and encouraged to choose any place to read where they would feel comfortable and undisturbed, while the adults also modelled reading for pleasure. Pupils responded well, instantly falling silent as they opened their books to start their reading. The school's library and class selections of books cater for pupils' reading tastes, whatever their abilities. Some most-able readers whom I listened to read during the inspection, told me that they have a wide choice of texts. They spoke confidently about books they had read and their favourite authors.
- You have identified that in mathematics in 2016 the proportion of pupils who achieved the higher standard was lower than the national average. You have carefully identified why this is and as a result have ensured that pupils are given greater opportunities for reasoning and problem-solving.
- Most pupils who have special educational needs and/or disabilities make good progress. Leaders know each child well and talk with staff regularly about their needs and how best to meet these. Leaders have ensured that class teachers take responsibility for planning and implementing additional support for these pupils and consequently the quality of plans for pupils who have special educational needs and/or disabilities has improved since the previous inspection. A range of additional support for pupils is provided and training given to those adults who deliver this support. However, leaders have not ensured that checks on support provided in class and additional support they receive are sufficiently rigorous. As a result, they are not able to identify clearly how provision could be further improved so that the progress made by a few pupils is more rapid.
- Pupils who are disadvantaged make good progress because the support provided for them is very well targeted. Leaders, including governors, think very carefully about how to overcome barriers to learning. They draw on national research about what works best to help them make decisions about how to use funding for disadvantaged pupils. For example, leaders identified that some pupils would benefit from the opportunity to act as peer tutors for younger pupils because in doing so they would build confidence and practise their own skills as they modelled for others. Good provision is also made for the most able disadvantaged pupils. For example, pupils are given opportunities to develop their leadership skills by sharing their own particular areas of enthusiasm and

expertise with others. As a result, they are enabled to grow in confidence and so make good progress.

- The proportion of children who achieved a good level of development at the end of the Reception Year has been variable since the previous inspection. This is partly because some years have included a high proportion of children who have special educational needs and/or disabilities. However, leaders also identified that some children, particularly boys, did not achieve as well in writing, which impacted on outcomes overall. As a result, opportunities for writing have been developed further. For example, children are encouraged to write cards at the writing table, to make lists as part of their role play and to draw and label models they have made. Learning journeys demonstrate that children enjoy a good range of learning experiences indoors and outdoors. For example, children learned about how to care for others through bathing their 'babies' in the outdoor baby clinic, and developed their descriptive vocabulary by making a 'crunchy leaf path' and discussing the colours of the leaves and the sounds made as they walked along it. Adults support learning well, asking questions and recording the progress children are making so that this can be used to plan new activities. Consequently, children in the Reception class are making good progress from their starting points.
- Pupils benefit from a very broad and interesting curriculum with lots of additional opportunities for learning. Pupils in Years 5 and 6 in particular demonstrate good skills in many subjects, such as science, geography and history, because they are given interesting tasks which make them think hard. For example, pupils were investigating and reflecting on Viking beliefs and how the Vikings expanded their territory. Inspection evidence demonstrates that art is taught well. Adults with flair and expertise use their skills well to inspire pupils to produce, for example, work in the style of Van Gogh. Opportunities for learning outside are planned carefully so that they make a valuable contribution to learning in a range of subjects and make learning memorable. For example, pupils in Years 1 and 2 role played 'Chicken Licken' outside in preparation for a piece of writing; some pupils made pictograms with their bodies outside to reinforce their mathematical understanding of graphs and charts. However, evidence of the progress that pupils make in some subjects is limited because key learning taking place in some practical lessons is not recorded. This means that sometimes it is not clear that teachers build on these learning experiences to ensure that pupils make as good progress in some subjects as in English and mathematics. Some subject leaders do not have enough opportunities to check on teaching, and because little is sometimes recorded, are sometimes unable to identify where pupils are making good progress and where this could be better. As a result, leaders are not all equally able to plan effectively for further improvement.

Next steps for the school

Leaders and those responsible for governance should ensure that:

- subject leaders have more consistent opportunities for checking the quality of teaching and learning in their subject so that they are all equally able to plan for further improvements.

- strategies are developed for capturing the learning that takes place in practical lessons so that this is used more effectively to assess pupils' progress and to plan subsequent lessons.

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 deputy headteacher. 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 the progress made by disadvantaged pupils, and those pupils who have special educational needs and/or disabilities, the effectiveness of provision in the early years, the progress of pupils in a range of subjects other than English and mathematics, and how the school keeps pupils safe.