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Mrs Julie Leach
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Dear Mrs Leach

Short inspection of The Holt Primary School

Following my visit to the school on 29 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 November 2011.

This school continues to be good.

The leadership team has maintained the good quality of education in the school since the last inspection.

Under your strong and dedicated leadership, the school continues to thrive. There is a great deal of ambition and drive to improve the school further. This is demonstrated by staff throughout the school. You have maintained high expectations of what staff should do and what pupils can achieve. This has brought about good outcomes for pupils over time. Pupils, staff, parents and governors are all proud to be a part of your school.

Governors have developed their strategic role since the last inspection and sharpened their practices successfully. Like you, they are ambitious for the pupils who attend The Holt Primary School and are unafraid to challenge themselves and others to make sure that their ambitions can be achieved.

All senior leaders and governors have an accurate understanding of the school's strengths and areas that need further work. Your improvement plans reflect the work which needs to take place to bring about the necessary improvements. For example, you have taken decisive action to address the dip in results in mathematics last year, and this is already improving pupils' outcomes.

Senior leaders place a strong emphasis on the quality of teaching in the school and

understand how this links to good outcomes for pupils. For example, the school's feedback policy is used by all staff consistently. Teachers have high expectations of the pupils in their classes and provide exciting and relevant learning experiences which interest and motivate them. Where teaching has been less effective, leaders, including those in middle leadership roles, provide relevant support and challenge. They demand accountability as necessary to ensure that pupils continue to receive high-quality teaching.

Pupils who attend The Holt Primary School are polite, cooperative and enjoy being a part of their community. Their behaviour is good and sometimes it is outstanding. They have positive attitudes to their learning and are keen to engage in fun and interesting lessons.

Over time, outcomes have been good. Children continue to make good progress in the early years. Phonics skills development is strong and outcomes remain well above national figures. The recent dip in mathematics outcomes has been tackled quickly. The school's tracking systems indicate that pupils currently in the school are making good progress.

The areas for improvement identified during the school's previous inspection have been addressed. More focused action planning has enabled leaders and governors to monitor and evaluate the impact of their work more accurately. Middle leaders are strengthening the overall provision, leading to better outcomes for pupils in the areas they oversee. However, while action has been taken to improve the collection of assessment information, it is not being used fully, by teachers, to ensure that all pupils are able to progress rapidly from their starting points. Nor does it provide leaders and governors with an overview of the progress that different ability groups are making. Leaders recognise these as areas which still need to be developed to bring about further improvements. Pupils' awareness of the diverse nature of society, raised at the last inspection, continues to be a focus for the school. Increasing pupils' understanding of British values has been identified in the school improvement plan.

You are not complacent about your successes and recognise that there is still work to be done. You acknowledge that the action taken to improve the quality of mathematics teaching will need to be monitored and evaluated in order to measure the improvement and determine how it can be sustained.

Safeguarding is effective.

All safeguarding arrangements are fit for purpose. Procedures to ensure that pupils are safe and secure in school are robust and have helped to create a climate within school where safeguarding is seen as a collective responsibility. Appropriate vetting checks are undertaken when staff join the school to ensure that they are suitable to work with children. Staff are trained to recognise all aspects of safeguarding so that they are able to respond to any situation which may present itself. Arrangements for safeguarding and child protection are monitored by a governor who is experienced and knowledgeable. The headteacher, as the designated teacher for

child protection and safeguarding, has strong and supportive relationships with social services and other agencies. This helps to provide pupils with any additional support they may need. Referrals are made in a timely manner and concerns followed up appropriately. Records are well maintained.

Pupils told me that they feel safe at the school. They know there is always someone they can talk with. The school's curriculum helps pupils to develop a good understanding of how to keep themselves safe in different situations. Pupils are clear that incidents of bullying are extremely rare in their school and that they are dealt with effectively when they do arise. Parents and carers, through Ofsted's online questionnaire, Parent View, agreed unanimously that their children are kept safe.

Inspection findings

- Leaders and governors have a sharply focused school improvement plan which is clearly linked to their accurate self-evaluation of the school's strengths and areas for improvement. Changes to the governing body since the last inspection have had a positive effect on the school. Governors have a range of experience and skills, which enable them to make an effective contribution in their respective roles. As a consequence, they are able to evaluate the work of the school from a more informed position. This has resulted in leaders and other school staff being increasingly challenged, as well as continuing to receive support. Stronger relationships between governors and individual teaching staff, together with thorough discussions about how teachers are rewarded for their work, are helping to link the quality of teaching to the outcomes pupils achieve.
- Middle leaders play a valuable role in supporting teaching and raising pupils' attainment. They draw on a range of evidence to determine the quality of teaching in their subject areas and act when standards fall below what is expected. Middle leaders provide support and training for other staff, check that the curriculum is successfully being implemented and ensure that whole-school approaches and policies are being adhered to. The impact of their work is demonstrated by the good progress the pupils make.
- Pupils' outcomes overall are good. The number of pupils reaching age-related expectations in the early years is above national figures. While progress at key stage 2 continues to be broadly average in reading and writing, it dipped in mathematics in 2016. Leaders have taken decisive action to address this. New approaches to teaching mathematics are in place and assessment information, maintained by the school, indicates that this is already having an impact on pupils' knowledge and understanding of mathematics. However, the impact of the new approaches has yet to be monitored and evaluated to ensure that they are fully effective and sustainable in the long term.
- The school's tracking indicates that, for current pupils in the school, attainment and progress in reading and writing continue to be good and above national figures. Leaders have ensured that reading has a high priority in the school. They have taken action and introduced literacy programmes to support this element of learning. However, pupils are a little confused about how often they are reading and have not grasped how the comprehension activities being undertaken

support their reading skills overall. Clarifying the connection between reading text and comprehension skills which inform understanding of what pupils are reading will help to secure further improvement in this subject. The readers I listened to all enjoyed reading and did so frequently. Pupils were confident and fluent in their reading. However, the lower-attaining pupils were less confident in their ability to predict what could happen in the stories they were reading.

- Leaders evaluate the performance of different groups of pupils. Pupils supported through the pupil premium funding make good progress. However, a dip in their achievement in mathematics replicates that of other groups of pupils in the school. Pupils who have special educational needs and/or disabilities and higher-attaining pupils also make good progress.
- Teachers plan learning activities which are exciting, relevant and capture pupils' interests. Pupils told me how much they enjoy their lessons because teachers make them fun. They are keen to take part in their lessons. They work harmoniously together and support each other when they are completing tasks. Pupils take pride in what they are doing and this is reflected in the presentation of their work, which is of a high standard. Resources are used very effectively to provide structure to learning and help pupils understand what they are doing so that they are able to do it again.
- The quality of teaching and the sharing of best practice are strengthened through effective school partnership work with other providers and the use of peer reviews. Staff throughout the school are committed to improving their practice. Teaching assistants provide effective support to pupils who have special educational needs and/or disabilities. However, the school is being active in further developing this resource by restructuring the support team to maximise the impact they can make on pupils' progress.
- Leaders are tenacious in their efforts to improve the attendance of all pupils. This is particularly true in relation to persistently absent pupils who are disadvantaged or who have special educational needs and/or disabilities. Records maintained by the school indicate an improvement in the number of pupils who are sustaining higher rates of attendance.
- From the Ofsted online questionnaire, Parent View, it is evident that the vast majority of parents value all aspects of the school's work. They are particularly appreciative of the care and support their children get from leaders and other staff and the progress their children make. Parents said how happy their children are at The Holt Primary School.
- The school meets the requirements on the publication of specified information on its website.

Next steps for the school

Leaders and those responsible for governance should ensure that:

- the new teaching programme introduced in mathematics is reviewed and evaluated for its impact on raising pupils' outcomes
- teachers consistently use assessment information accurately to match work to pupils' different starting points, so that pupils at all levels of ability can move on

to harder work more quickly

- the school's tracking systems, which measure pupils' progress, are refined so that leaders and governors have an accurate picture of what additional support pupils need to make the progress they make more rapid.

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

Yours sincerely

Vondra Mays
Ofsted Inspector

Information about the inspection

During the inspection I held meetings with you, the deputy headteacher, the senior teacher, middle leaders and representatives of the governing body, including the chair of the governing body.

I made a series of visits to lessons, together with you and your deputy headteacher. I listened to pupils read from Year 2, Year 3 and Year 4 and held a discussion with a group of Year 5 and Year 6 pupils.

In addition, I considered a range of documents, including the school's self-evaluation, the school's improvement plan, records relating to pupils' attendance and information on outcomes for pupils. Safeguarding practices were also reviewed. I examined the school's website to check that it meets requirements on the publication of specified information.

I also considered the views of 38 parents posted on Ofsted's online survey, Parent View, including 15 free text responses. The 15 responses from staff and the seven responses from pupils, to the Ofsted questionnaires, were also considered.

This short inspection focused on whether:

- leaders were taking effective action to address the drop, in 2016, in mathematics outcomes for middle-attaining pupils
- disadvantaged pupils in key stage 2 were making good progress in mathematics and in grammar, punctuation and spelling
- attendance and rates of persistent absence of disadvantaged pupils and pupils who have special educational needs and/or disabilities were improving
- middle leaders and governors were contributing effectively to school improvement
- safeguarding was effective and pupils are safe.