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Dear Mrs O'Donnell

Short inspection of Epping Primary School

Following my visit to the school on 12 January 2017, 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 2012.

This school continues to be good.

The leadership team has maintained the good quality of education in the school since the last inspection and there has been little change in either leaders or staff during this time. You have recently, however, employed a pastoral support worker as a result of consultation with staff on what would best aid their daily work. This has clearly had a considerable impact on both the outcomes of pupils and the effectiveness with which your whole team manage some of the most vulnerable pupils in the school. The addition of nurture and sensory rooms, and the support that is offered to vulnerable pupils both inside and outside of the classroom, is having a direct impact on their readiness to learn and the progress they make. As a consequence of this work to support the eclectic mix of pupils you have at the school, pupils' behaviour is a key strength of the school. Pupils show respect for each other, support each other and work extremely well together in activities from team games in the hall, to collaboratively writing an information booklet.

You and your experienced leaders know the school extremely well and have accurately identified the areas of strength and those that need to be improved. You have created a culture of continual learning for staff and pupils which is palpable. It is clear from my visit that you have a team of committed, determined and caring staff. The enthusiasm with which all leaders speak about the school and its work to improve pupils' outcomes is commendable. Many of your teachers are 'home-grown' and are very effectively leading aspects of school improvement, for example in mathematics. Pupils say that they enjoy coming to their 'amazing' school and like the opportunity they have to earn 'dojos' when they have achieved well. During my

visit, there was a buzz of activity in every room and in each lesson I saw. From the very youngest children to the oldest pupils, the enthusiasm with which they approach their learning is impressive. They like the responsibility you have given them to challenge themselves in the 'star challenges', and readily extend their learning without being prompted. The work you have done on developing and altering pupils' learning mindset is undoubtedly paying off. 'We're learning about time, which is quite hard, but I want to challenge myself,' said a child in Year 1 who decided to try to recognise, write and show quarter to 11 on his clock.

The emphasis you have put on developing pupils' reasoning and problem-solving skills in mathematics across other subjects is paying dividends. The level of debate between pupils in a science lesson discussing, for example, the prediction of what might happen when using a Newton to pull a weight across different surfaces was impressive. Pupils are not afraid to challenge each other and willingly explain their thinking even to visitors. 'We're going to Australia on the magic carpet, so I am putting this blue cloth down to show we have to cross the sea,' said one child in the Reception class. This type of response is typical of pupils at Epping Primary school and is a credit to the continued hard work and determination of you and your staff. The vast majority of parents who responded to Parent View agree. They say their children are happy at school, are taught well and make good progress. This is largely due to your commitment to constantly improve the quality of teaching and increase the experiences that pupils at the school are offered. The walls are adorned with, for example, high-quality art, writing and science work. Pupils are proud of their work and the guidance teachers give them on how to improve their learning. The expectation that you set on pupils responding to teachers' comments is evident, particularly in mathematics. It is clear that pupils know what they are good at and what they want or need to improve. They say they would like even more challenge and further opportunities to show what they are capable of. This is a credit to you, your staff and the parents.

Safeguarding is effective.

All staff are committed to safeguarding pupils and recognise their responsibility in ensuring that pupils are safe and secure at school. Leaders have put in place very thorough systems to track pupils' attendance and punctuality, and staff will do everything possible to ensure that pupils are regularly in school. As a result, attendance of the most vulnerable pupils is steadily improving. Effective checks are made on the suitability of staff to work with children. Induction of new staff is very thorough and includes up-to-date training on the 'Prevent' duty. The school's systems for recording incidents of concern are very well developed. Leaders effectively use the information that this system generates, highlighting any patterns in, for example, poor behaviour. As a result, early warning signs are detected quickly and support put in place in a timely and appropriate manner, which might include, for example, individual counselling for pupils. One parent said, 'The school is very inclusive and proactive in making things happen,' while another said the school is: 'A great supportive and progressive environment for pupils to learn and develop in.'

Inspection findings

- One of the key lines of enquiry was the progress the school has made since the previous inspection on improving the quality of teaching so that more pupils exceed the expected progress. The proportions of pupils at the end of key stage 2 who exceed expected progress has risen steadily over the last four years in reading, writing and mathematics. The number of pupils across the school who are making more than expected progress is high in many year groups and equally so in reading and mathematics. This is less consistent in writing. Teachers know their pupils well and guide them well in developing their learning by asking searching questions or writing helpful comments in their books. Pupils know what they are meant to be learning in each lesson, know what is expected of them and regularly challenge themselves to do even better. However, some teachers' expectations of pupils' use of basic English skills are not as high when pupils are writing in other subjects.
- The second line of enquiry also related to progress since the previous inspection: ensuring that subject leaders monitor the quality of pupils' learning and use assessment information well to check on pupils' progress. You have ensured that there are rigorous systems in place to identify gaps in pupils' learning and put in support quickly to help pupils catch up. Leaders have good subject knowledge of the areas for which they are responsible. They regularly support their colleagues to improve their skills, evidence of which was seen during the inspection in, for example, mathematics. As a result of effective monitoring and highlighting individual staff's needs, staff meetings are used very effectively to ensure the right support is given to individuals who need it and, therefore, time is used efficiently. Pupils and staff alike have undoubtedly benefited from the introduction of pupil conferences to discuss pupils' learning, which are now routine. As a result of teachers' good use of assessment information, targeted support and thorough preparation of appropriate learning to meet individuals' needs, most pupils make good progress. In reading and mathematics in the majority of classes, over a third of pupils exceed the progress the school expects of them.
- A key line of enquiry related to the outcomes for disadvantaged pupils. These were below national average in 2016 at the end of key stages 1 and 2. Evidence seen during the inspection showed that most disadvantaged pupils currently in the school make at least expected progress in reading and mathematics from their varying starting points, and many make more than expected progress. There is less progress for this group in writing for a variety of reasons which we explored during my visit. Progress of all pupils is tracked thoroughly and the impact of leaders' actions can be seen in lessons, in pupils' books and in the reducing numbers of behaviour incidents. The pastoral provision for disadvantaged pupils across the school is highly effective. Pupils are supported very well to ensure that they are ready to learn. Good use is made of the additional funding for this group of pupils. Counselling, family support work and behaviour support are provided for a growing number of pupils. However, you are aware that this group remains vulnerable and you, your leadership team and

governors are determined to keep the progress of these pupils as a high priority for the school.

- How well governors hold leaders to account for the outcomes of all pupils, and in particular the most vulnerable pupils, was my last line of enquiry. Governors were identified as a strength in the previous inspection and they continue to have a positive impact on securing the best outcomes for pupils. The chair of governors is a national leader of governance and not only supports this school, but also others. The governing body has in place rigorous systems to check on the progress that the school makes in the areas that have been highlighted for improvement, in which they are actively involved. Governors make informed decisions on pay awards based on reliable information from leaders. The governing body employs an external consultant to support them with the management of the headteacher's performance. It is evident that this process is very effective in maintaining the good standard of education in the school.

Next steps for the school

Leaders and those responsible for governance should ensure that:

- teachers' expectations of the presentation of work in pupils' books, particularly in writing, is consistently high across all subjects
- all adults have consistently high expectations of what every pupil can achieve to ensure they make the progress of which they are capable

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

Yours sincerely

Ruth Brock
Her Majesty's Inspector

Information about the inspection

I met with you, your deputy headteacher and inclusion manager to discuss progress since the previous inspection. I held a meeting with your mathematics subject leader to discuss outcomes for pupils and the impact of decisions she has made. I met with a group of governors, including the chair of the governing body, a representative from the local authority and a group of key stage 2 pupils selected by you. I scrutinised a variety of sources of information including your self-evaluation, the school's plans for improvement, and assessment information for all year groups. I also scrutinised the school's safeguarding and child protection procedures, the records of checks leaders make on the suitability of staff to work with children, and information relating to attendance. We both undertook observations of learning in a variety of subjects across the school, viewed work in pupils' books, and spoke with pupils about their learning during lessons.