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Mrs Christine Edmunds
Headteacher
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Dear Mrs Edmunds

Short inspection of Hemblington Primary

Following my visit to the school on 17 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 March 2012.

This school continues to be good.

Hemblington Primary school is a village school where each pupil is well known and recognised as an individual. Pupils told me that 'the school is for everyone' reflecting the school's inclusive ethos which is demonstrated in practice by you, staff and governors.

You lead the school very effectively. Since taking up the post of headteacher, you have worked successfully to establish a cohesive team with a shared commitment to achieving the very best for all pupils. You have identified what is working well and built upon it, for example the quality of pupils' writing, which is strong across the school. You have also identified correctly those areas where further improvements need to be made to make the school even better. Your plans for securing these changes set out clearly what actions are needed. You and your governors check regularly that everything is on track and that these actions are proving effective.

You are well supported by the governing body. Governors visit the school regularly, carefully checking that standards remain high. They have confidence in your leadership but are prepared to challenge you when necessary. For example, they asked about the impact that the improvements to the library and the cooking room would have on pupils' learning before sanctioning expenditure.

Teaching is consistently good in all classes. Teachers plan lessons which meet pupils' needs well. They provide work which challenges the most able pupils, and provide

appropriate support for those who have more difficulties. Pupils told me that 'this is a school where a mistake is just an opportunity for learning'. This reflects the emphasis placed by all staff on developing pupils' positive attitudes to learning.

Pupils behave well in lessons and around the school. They are respectful towards adults and cooperate well together, enjoying helping each other and playing together at playtimes. Pupils who have difficulties with their behaviour are managed well, and the school's good work at meeting pupils' individual needs has been recognised by external agencies as a model for other schools. Despite this, a few parents feel that the school does not always deal with incidents as well as they would like.

The large majority of parents who responded to the Ofsted online questionnaire are very supportive of the school. They say that their children are happy in school and taught well. A small number of parents said that they would welcome more information about the progress that their child is making in school.

Children in the early years enjoy a positive start to school because staff work hard to involve parents. For example, this year staff conducted home visits prior to the start of the year which parents found useful. Adults take time to get to know what children in the Reception class enjoy and plan tasks that build upon their interests. As a result, children in the Reception class enjoy their learning and make good progress right from the start.

Safeguarding is effective.

You ensure that pupils' safety is a key priority in the school. You work with your administrators to ensure that all statutory checks on staff are carried out and recorded appropriately, making sure that any changes in requirements are acted upon swiftly. You and your safeguarding governor regularly check records to ensure that they are fully compliant. Regular training is provided for all staff, with updates whenever necessary. This is effective as staff demonstrate that they know the signs to look for that may indicate a child is at risk. Staff told me what they would do if they did have a concern and are confident that leaders would act appropriately. Pupil files are well maintained and demonstrate that concerns are followed up with parents and external agencies where necessary. However, some follow-up action with parents is recorded in a separate file rather than with the concern. As a result, it is sometimes difficult to follow the sequence of actions taken. You have recognised that this system needs changing to keep all information together.

Pupils say that school is a safe place and that there is someone to talk with if they have any worries. All parents who responded to the Ofsted online questionnaire agree that their child feels safe in school. Pupils are knowledgeable about what to do to keep themselves safe including when using technology such as the internet. This is because they learn about this regularly in school.

Inspection findings

- At the start of the inspection, we agreed that one area to investigate would be how effectively leaders had addressed the previous inspection issues around enriching the curriculum and sharing best practice. Inspection evidence shows that a broad and varied curriculum is provided, which pupils enjoy. Learning, particularly in English, is extended and enriched by opportunities for pupils to use and develop their skills within other subjects. For example, pupils wrote at length about Florence Nightingale in history and about inheritance in science. Writing in a range of different contexts develops pupils' skills and motivates them.
- Pupils benefit from a range of interesting and creative opportunities for learning in lessons and beyond. For example, on the day of the inspection, pupils in Year 1 were finding out about road safety outside the school. Pupils told me about the clubs they take part in and about the many lessons they enjoy, particular favourites being art and history. One pupil spoke enthusiastically about her favourite lesson saying 'I loved learning about "what makes me, me" in philosophy and went home and told my mum all about it.' Teachers also make use of unexpected opportunities for learning such as on a snowy day when the planned curriculum was modified so that pupils could explore the weather and write about their experiences.
- Staff share their practice with each other willingly, often talking informally about their lessons and asking for suggestions about how to further improve. Teachers spoke about how well they work together as a team. Both teachers and additional adults identify this as a key strength of the school. This teamwork and sharing of good practice has ensured that good-quality teaching is the norm across the school.
- We discussed the strong progress pupils continue to make in English and mathematics and looked at pupils' books that confirmed the accuracy of this view. However, you acknowledge that in mathematics, while pupils develop strong skills, for example in calculations, they are not being provided with sufficiently frequent opportunities for reasoning and problem solving in all classes.
- We agreed that another area to look at during the inspection was whether pupils make equally good progress in other subjects. Pupils' work in subjects such as history, religious education and geography is of a high standard because teachers maintain the same high expectations of pupils' work in these subjects as in English and mathematics. Teachers make sure that work in these subjects is matched to pupils' abilities, modifying tasks where necessary and extending them for others.
- Subject leaders carry out a range of activities to support teaching and learning in the subject for which they are responsible. They have developed action plans linked to the school development plan. However, you recognise that there is more to be done to develop the role of subject leaders and this is a key priority in your improvement plan. You are providing subject leaders with training and support so they can carry out more rigorous checks on the quality of teaching and learning, and lead improvements. New assessment systems are being introduced for subjects other than English and mathematics so that leaders are better able to identify where pupils make best progress and where progress is slower. It is too

early to judge the impact.

- Another area I looked at specifically was the progress made by pupils who have special educational needs and/or disabilities. You are the leader for special educational needs and fulfil this role well. You keep careful and detailed records of the needs of each child and the progress that they make. You are aware that targets on individual pupil 'passports' occasionally lack precision and you have already addressed this with teachers. You evaluate the quality of the support provided regularly, checking on the impact of additional support provided whether in a small group or in class, to make sure that individual pupil needs are well met.
- Additional adults support pupils who have special educational needs and/or disabilities well. They work with class teachers effectively so that they know exactly what to do in lessons and in small group work.
- Pupils' work and school assessment information shows that pupils who have special educational needs and/or disabilities make good progress, especially in reading where reading results show that a number of pupils make accelerated progress.

Next steps for the school

Leaders and those responsible for governance should ensure that:

- middle leaders continue to develop their skills and expertise so that they take a lead in identifying priorities and planning effectively for improvement
- new systems for assessment in subjects other than English and mathematics are firmly established and used to identify where pupils make best progress and where this needs to be better
- opportunities for reasoning and problem solving in mathematics are more frequently provided in all classes.

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, I held meetings with you, a representative of the local authority and with two governors. I met 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.