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Caroline Boother
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Dear Mrs Boother

Short inspection of Hatherleigh Community Primary School

Following my visit to the school on 18 May 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 February 2013.

This school continues to be good.

The leadership team has maintained the good quality of education in the school since the last inspection. You provide determined leadership and you are well supported by the deputy headteacher, other senior and middle leaders and all the other staff. Effective teamwork is at the heart of the school's approach and has ensured that pupils continue to make good progress during their time in the school.

You have successfully tackled the areas for further development that were identified at the time of the previous inspection. For instance, you have made substantial and effective changes to the provision and support for pupils who have special educational needs and/or disabilities. As a result, these pupils are making good progress, whatever their starting points.

In addition, you, other leaders and governors are very clear about the key priorities that the school needs to work on to improve even further. The current focus on the progress of middle-ability pupils, for example, results from a thorough analysis of the school's past performance and a clear understanding of the needs of individual children. You are also aware that recent changes to the way the school tracks and monitors pupils' progress need further embedding.

The vast majority parents who responded to Ofsted's surveys of their opinions would recommend the school to a prospective parent. Many parents took the opportunity to commend the support they receive from staff at the school and to praise the breadth of

the curriculum and the wide variety of extra-curricular activities. In my discussions with them and in their responses to the online survey, pupils were just as positive about the school as their parents. They clearly enjoy coming to school and feel happy and safe while they are learning.

Safeguarding is effective.

The leadership team has ensured that all safeguarding arrangements are fit for purpose and records are detailed and of high quality. You have established a strong culture of safeguarding in the school. In your role as the designated safeguarding lead, you ensure that all staff are fully aware that safeguarding is everyone's responsibility whatever their particular job. As a result, staff are vigilant and there are clear, well-established procedures for reporting any concerns. Your work with external agencies is thorough and well documented. Understanding of the government's 'Prevent' duty is good. Staff training is up to date and all the necessary pre-employment checks are carried out on teachers and other staff.

Inspection findings

- My first line of enquiry during this inspection concerned the provision for pupils who have special educational needs and/or disabilities. This aspect of the school's work was identified as an area for further improvement at the previous inspection in 2013. Since then, the school has made substantial changes to its approach to catering for pupils who have special educational needs and/or disabilities and as a result the quality of the support they receive has improved considerably. Planning to meet pupils' individual needs is clear, with their teachers and families closely involved. As a result of these improvements, pupils who have special educational needs and/or disabilities are typically making good progress, whatever their individual starting points.
- Pupils who have special educational needs and/or disabilities recognise the high quality of the support that they receive. In conversation with me they spoke appreciatively and in detail about the support they receive and how it helps them to learn more effectively. Many parents also spoke warmly about the school's work with their children and the support they receive as families.
- The inspection's second line of enquiry looked at how effectively school leaders were promoting progress in writing across the early years foundation stage, key stage 1 and key stage 2. For a number of years the proportion of children in the early years achieving the early learning goal in writing has been higher than the national average. In the 2016 national curriculum assessments in key stages 1 and 2, however, pupils' attainment and progress in writing was below the national average. Nonetheless, extensive sampling of the work of current pupils reveals that they are now making typically good progress across the key stages. Their writing is characterised by developing creativity, secure punctuation and correct grammar. However, some pupils' spelling is not as secure. Pupils' ability to use their writing skills across the curriculum is not as well developed, particularly for those capable of achieving greater depth within the expected standard.

- The third line of enquiry examined whether school leaders are ensuring that middle-ability pupils make good progress in key stage 2, especially those who are disadvantaged. The results of the 2016 national curriculum assessments at key stage 2 revealed a pattern of middle-ability pupils making less progress than similar pupils nationally. School leaders are well aware of this situation and have taken effective action to tackle it. A new tracking and monitoring system has been introduced and it places particular emphasis on analysing the achievement of middle-ability pupils. Although this system needs further time to bed in, there is clear evidence that an increased focus on the achievement of middle-ability pupils is leading to improvements in their performance. Scrutiny of the work of middle-ability pupils, including those who are disadvantaged, indicates that they are now making good progress across a range of subjects, including English and mathematics.
- My final line of enquiry was concerned with pupils' attendance. Overall absence has been low and falling for some years. Despite this, the absence and persistent absence rates for two key groups – disadvantaged pupils and those who have special educational needs and/or disabilities – were too high. School leaders have worked hard to tackle this situation and have secured notable improvements. In particular, the persistent absence rates of these two groups have fallen dramatically and are now below the national average for all pupils.

Next steps for the school

Leaders and those responsible for governance should ensure that:

- recent changes to the way achievement is tracked and monitored are fully embedded, so that they provide teachers with high-quality information on which to plan their teaching
- pupils in key stage 2 develop further their writing across the curriculum, so that a higher proportion of them attain greater depth within the standard.

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

Yours sincerely

Stephen Lee
Her Majesty's Inspector

Information about the inspection

I met with you and the deputy headteacher at the start of the day in order to discuss the school's self-evaluation and draw up the key lines of enquiry for the inspection. During the rest of the day, I undertook observations in lessons jointly with you. During these I took the opportunity to look at a wide sample of pupils' work and to talk to them about

their learning. I held a number of discussions throughout the day with you, other leaders, governors and a group of pupils. I also spoke to the school's improvement partner on the telephone. I examined a wide range of the school's documentation, including its safeguarding records. In reaching my judgements, I took account of responses to the online surveys of the opinions of parents, pupils and staff.