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Mr James Newell
Headteacher
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Dear Mr Newell

Short inspection of Wix and Wrabness Primary School

Following my visit to the school on 11 July 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 your school was judged to be good in June 2013.

This school continues to be good.

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

Parents, pupils and governors recognise the improvements that you, your senior teacher and staff have made to the school. You, along with your newly appointed senior teacher, have continued to improve the provision since your arrival in September 2016. You are highly appreciative of the valuable support you have received from the local authority and from other local schools during your first year as headteacher.

Governors and parents speak highly of your support and approachability. One parent commented: 'The headteacher sets an excellent example to the pupils in demonstrating care, empathy and respect to pupils and families'. Another parent said that it is a 'smashing' school and that staff go above and beyond their duty. Staff are fully involved in your development planning. They appreciate the support and the wide-ranging professional development opportunities they receive. Staff and parents are confident that the school is well led and managed.

Pupils conduct themselves very well throughout the school day, including during

social times. In lessons, older pupils work harmoniously and supportively with younger pupils in mixed-age classes. This creates a strong community feel to the school. Pupils report that, even though staff may have changed in the past year, their new teachers and teaching assistants are, 'really nice and you can talk to them about anything'. Pupils say that bullying rarely occurs but when it does, staff deal effectively with the issue.

Through your new creative curriculum, you broaden pupils' aspirations and horizons, and ignite natural curiosity. Much of this was evident in lessons and through the vibrant displays. In particular, the teaching of art is exceptionally strong and pupils of all ages produce creative pieces of work, such as paintings, print and sculpture, including a superb modelling display of mouths and teeth for a science project. Pupils benefit from working with theatre groups. They spoke animatedly about the visiting theatre production, which explored the life and times of the pilgrims aboard the ship, The Mayflower. Pupils enjoy a variety of workshops to try and widen their aspirations for higher education, for example in science workshops investigating the DNA of strawberries. One pupil commented that she was inspired by such visits to want to study at university.

You and the governors have a secure understanding of the strengths and weaknesses of the school. Governors are proactive and seek to be the best they can be through sharing ideas and practice with other governing bodies in local high-performing schools. They are determined to offer the best education possible to the school's pupils. Governors have fully supported the improvements in the early years outdoor provision and the increased staffing in early years and key stage 1 classes. Both of these decisions have had a positive effect on improving provision and pupils' outcomes.

In the previous inspection, leaders were asked to raise standards in writing, and in particular for pupils to practise writing skills in subjects other than English. You were also asked to make sure that teachers planned activities that are suitably challenging, especially for the most able. Standards in writing have improved substantially since the previous inspection. A number of initiatives have helped, although you are still developing pupils' opportunities to apply these skills across the wider curriculum. You also identify that the number of children in the early years making rapid progress to reach the highest standards is still an area of continued work for you.

Safeguarding is effective.

The last inspection reported that pupils were happy to attend school and that safety was high on the school's agenda. This is still the case. Pupils feel happy and safe at school. They are caring towards each other and the curriculum teaches them to keep themselves safe in a variety of situations, including when using the internet. The care provided for pupils who have particular difficulties or personal needs is exemplary. Leaders ensure that all staff have the information and training they need to help care for and support pupils. You have ensured that all safeguarding arrangements are fit for purpose and

records are detailed. You and other leaders are diligent in your work to keep children safe. Systems to monitor the well-being of pupils are robust and well managed. Governors monitor many aspects of safeguarding effectively, for example, reviewing site security and gathering pupils' and parents' views.

Inspection findings

- My first line of enquiry was to review how effectively teachers challenge pupils, especially the most able, in their learning. This was because in Year 6, in 2016, the proportion of pupils reaching the higher standards in reading, writing and mathematics was below the national average. Upon your arrival at the school, you carefully investigated why this was the case. You have altered the curriculum as a result and are working effectively on raising expectations of what the most able pupils can achieve.
- The impact of this work was clearly seen in your recent test results for the end of key stage 2, where higher standards were attained by a good number of pupils. The school's own information shows that increasing proportions of pupils are now exceeding expectations. Pupils were particularly articulate in explaining how they resolved problems regarding the calculation of the weight of different fruits.
- Most-able pupils are attaining more highly and are making better progress than in previous years. This is due to extensive staff training on how to challenge pupils, for example through the questions staff ask. Pupils commented that they enjoy the new focus on challenge and mastery in lessons. They also mentioned that they have learned to 'persevere' when they do not understand more difficult material.
- Nevertheless, following visits to lessons and scrutiny of work in pupils' books, it is evident that the progress of the most able pupils, and those with the potential to achieve even higher standards, remains a continued focus for the school, in particular, focusing on the early years foundation stage and writing across the school.
- My second line of enquiry was to review how leaders were securing strong outcomes for girls. In 2016, Year 6 middle-ability girls did not perform as well as boys in mathematics. Equally, the small group of girls in Reception did not achieve as well in the areas of communication and language, and literacy. Leaders' actions have improved the situation for current pupils.
- The new mathematics curriculum stimulates and challenges pupils. Girls are performing in line with boys. Pupils' books showed a good understanding of mathematical concepts and pupils understood the need to present methodology clearly.
- The additional staffing in Reception and a sharp focus on literacy in outdoor learning have addressed previous shortcomings. During our class visits, we saw staff asking probing questions to check children's depth of understanding. The children's work completed over time showed effective development of their literacy skills. In Reception, both boys and girls are making good progress from their individual starting points.
- My third line of enquiry was to review how leaders are improving the quality of

writing in the school.

- Successful actions have been taken to promote and improve writing. Pupils demonstrate pride in their work and this is evident throughout their books and in the quality of work on display. In particular, due to the new handwriting policy, boys are proud of their handwriting and show off their cursive script.
- Spelling, punctuation and grammar have improved as there is a sharp focus on accuracy in lessons. Topic books that capture learning in other subjects show a variety of writing forms being practised.
- Pupils are enthused by writing for the school newspaper. They have the opportunity to work with local writers and journalists on 'The Curious Times' and this has inspired many. Pupils are writing for pleasure now. One teacher reported that pupils were writing poetry at home (without being asked to by the teacher) and bringing examples in to share with other pupils. Where we saw extended writing in books, pupils were able to sustain reader engagement.
- Nonetheless, there are still too few opportunities for pupils to practise extended writing in other subjects. In some work by most-able pupils there was a lack of flair and originality. You recognise this and have in place strategies to promote writing style and voice.
- My final line of enquiry was to look at how leaders were securing good attendance for pupils at the school. Most pupils attend the school regularly. However, attendance figures for disadvantaged pupils have been below the national average in primary schools in recent years. Being a small school, the continual absence of one child can alter significantly the overall attendance figures. You closely track individuals whose attendance is a concern and work effectively with their families to reduce absence. However, the attendance of disadvantaged pupils is still not reaching the national average.

Next steps for the school

Leaders and those responsible for governance should ensure that:

- teaching consistently challenges pupils, particularly the most able, to reach higher standards, including in the early years
- all teachers provide opportunities for pupils to develop and practise writing at length and with flair
- leaders continue their work to improve disadvantaged pupils' attendance.

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

Liz Smith
Ofsted Inspector

Information about the inspection

During the inspection, I met with you and your senior teacher, parents and members of the governing body. I also spoke with a representative from the local authority. I reviewed a range of documents, including those relating to attendance, behaviour and safeguarding. I looked at the school's own self-evaluation, the improvement priorities and assessment information.

Throughout the inspection, I spoke with small groups of pupils around the school, in lessons and formally. I jointly observed teaching and learning in various classes with you and scrutinised writing, mathematics and topic books from pupils across the school. In addition, I listened to pupils read during their phonics sessions.

I considered the views expressed by parents through informal meetings and the 22 responses to Ofsted's online survey (Parent View) as well as comments received via the free-text facility on Parent View.