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Mrs Magen Box
Head of School
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Dear Mrs Box

Short inspection of Easton Primary School

Following my visit to the school on 27 September 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 previous inspection.

Since the reorganisation of the leadership team at Easton and your appointment as head of school, you have correctly identified that there is work to do to make the school even better. You are determined to continue the journey of improvement. Together with the support of a principal of a neighbouring school, you have written an action plan securely focused on key priorities for raising attainment and improving outcomes for all children and pupils.

You lead by example in demonstrating how staff can support each other in getting better at what they do for the benefit of the pupils. You want to provide all pupils with the opportunity to achieve their best. The leaders in the trust encourage and nurture your ambition and the staff team supports you well.

Pupils achieve well across the school because all staff know their needs and strive to meet them. Pupils are polite and enjoy their learning. They are full of praise for their school, describing it as 'happy', 'respectful' and 'fun'. They enjoy the number of opportunities they have to take part in a range of activities and contribute to the life of the school, through leadership roles such as house captains. Pupils work well together in the mixed-age classes, benefiting from both the social interactions and the opportunities to learn from a wider group of peers.

Leaders at Easton have taken action to address the areas for improvement from the previous inspection. They have successfully monitored and evaluated the effectiveness of strategies used to raise the attainment of boys. Across the school, the progress and attainment of boys are now similar to those of girls. An increased emphasis on high-quality teaching and more accurate identification of gaps in learning have led to improved outcomes.

Raising standards in mathematics has continued to be successful. The number of pupils achieving the expected standard is maintained at high levels despite the national increase in expectations at all key stages. There has been an increase in the opportunities given to pupils to carry out investigations and solve problems. A well-planned curriculum allows pupils to apply mathematics in other subjects.

However, there is still a need to improve teachers' knowledge in teaching mathematics so that teaching builds on the skills pupils already have more effectively.

There is also a need to take a more consistent approach across the school to the teaching of the technical aspects of writing, including spelling, to continue to improve outcomes in writing.

Safeguarding is effective.

The culture of safeguarding is evident across every aspect of the school's work. You and your staff know each pupil well and provide high levels of nurture and support. Pupils are confident, happy and safe. Parents speak positively about how well their children are cared for and how well staff respond to concerns.

Pupils of all ages have a good understanding of how to keep themselves safe. They learn about different types of safety in the curriculum and the e-safety ambassadors effectively promote how to keep safe when using the internet. Pupils of all ages play very well together.

Staff training is up to date and all safeguarding records are well organised and accurate. When necessary, you work effectively with external agencies to support your pupils' needs.

Inspection findings

- The first line of enquiry I looked at was how well the school identifies and meets the needs of pupils who have special educational needs and/or disabilities and those who are disadvantaged. This was because there was very little recent published information as to how these groups of pupils were progressing, or what was in place to meet their needs.
- It is clear that the actions staff take to meet the needs of pupils who require additional support continue to be effective. Regular, accurate assessment of individual learning needs leads to well-planned programmes of support. The effective monitoring and evaluation of this support means that pupils make good

progress from their starting points. Additional adults support teaching well and make a positive contribution to promoting good learning behaviours.

- My next line of enquiry was to look at the level of challenge for the most able pupils, particularly linked to writing. This was because the gaps between reading and writing outcomes for the most able have widened at key stage 2.
- You recognise that the teaching of spelling, punctuation and grammar as well as handwriting needs to be more consistent across the school. Although there are many opportunities for the pupils to develop their writing skills across the curriculum and for writing creatively, the lack of a sound grasp of the more technical aspects of writing is still preventing a few pupils from achieving even better outcomes.
- I also looked closely at outcomes for the most able pupils in mathematics, as they continue to be lower than those in both reading and writing are across the school.
- You acknowledge that despite intensive efforts, improving outcomes for the most able in mathematics has been more problematic. The school has sought, and received support, to change the way it teaches mathematics to increase the emphasis on developing problem-solving and reasoning skills. However, there remain gaps in pupils' knowledge and understanding, particularly in number and place value. This is slowing down their ability to apply the higher-order skills needed to master concepts that are more complex. There is still some inconsistency in the use of assessment information. Some of the most able pupils are not given the opportunity to extend and deepen their knowledge quickly enough.
- I also focused on curriculum planning. I explored how this meets the needs of pupils in mixed-aged classes. Given the ongoing growth in pupil numbers, I also explored how well the needs of pupils who do not join the school in Reception are met.
- The school has given a great deal of time and thought to developing a curriculum that meets the needs of the pupils at Easton. Given the small numbers of pupils in each year group, there are comprehensive plans in place to minimise the effect of fluctuations in numbers. These plans ensure that all pupils have access to a range of topics that allows them to develop their knowledge, skills and understanding across a range of subjects. The curriculum engages pupils in their learning and provides a number of opportunities to extend their learning beyond the confines of the classroom.
- The final line of enquiry was to look at how leaders are promoting the vision of 'collaboration to improve standards'. The trust has grown and changed considerably over the past few years. I explored the impact of this for Easton.
- The trust has been proactive in providing support across four schools. Leaders and staff from Easton have benefited from and shared expertise across many areas, including computing and sports as well as support for leadership. However, this has meant that school leaders at Easton have been balancing many responsibilities and capacity to secure improvements has been restricted. Significant changes to the organisation of the trust from September 2017, and

clear roles and responsibility as well as accountability, have significantly increased leadership capacity at Easton.

Next steps for the school

Leaders and those responsible for governance should ensure that:

- they continue to focus on improving the level of challenge in mathematics so that all teaching quickly identifies when pupils are ready to achieve more and deepen their learning, thus ensuring that more pupils across the school attain the highest standards in mathematics
- the teaching of spelling, punctuation and grammar as well as handwriting is consistently effective across the school.

I am copying this letter to the chair of the governing body, the chief executive officer or equivalent of the multi academy trust, the regional schools commissioner and the director of children's services for Suffolk. This letter will be published on the Ofsted website.

Yours sincerely

Liz Chaplin
Her Majesty's Inspector

Information about the inspection

Meetings were held with you, the executive principal, the chief executive of the trust, the principal of a neighbouring school, middle leaders and administrative staff. We discussed the key lines of enquiry for this inspection, the school's internal evaluation of its performance, trust documentation, plans for future improvement and information about current pupils' attendance, progress and attainment as well as checking safeguarding arrangements.

I gathered a range of evidence to judge the quality of teaching, learning and assessment. This included joint observations of teaching and learning in all classes with the executive principal, and sampling of pupils' current work across all subjects and across a wide range of abilities. Samples of work from last year were also considered.

There were no responses to Ofsted's online pupil survey to take into consideration. However, I spoke informally to a number of pupils in classrooms about their learning and met more formally with a group of pupils to talk about their school experiences. I also considered the school's own survey on pupils' views.

Policies and procedures for the safeguarding of pupils were examined, including checks made about pupils who had left the school and attendance information for all groups of pupils. A discussion was held with the school's designated

safeguarding lead.

I reviewed the school website. The views of 20 parents who responded to Parent View were taken into account. There were no responses to Ofsted's online staff survey.