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Mr Martin Kitchen
Headteacher
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Dear Mr Kitchen

Short inspection of John Emmerson Batty Primary School

Following my visit to the school on 4 October 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 July 2013.

This school continues to be good.

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

Parents are delighted with the quality of education their children receive at John Emmerson Batty Primary School. An overwhelming majority said that they would recommend the school. They told me that they find you, other leaders and class teachers to be friendly and approachable and that everyone works hard to create a positive and supportive learning community. As headteacher, you continually set a positive tone. Your staff feel well led and enjoy their work. You hold an accurate picture of how well the school is performing and ensure that your staff know where improvements can be made. As a result, any areas that need to be improved are quickly addressed. Good academic outcomes have been sustained over recent years and provisional results for 2017 show that standards in each phase of the school are rising.

In the last inspection, you were asked to improve standards in writing, because they lagged behind those being attained in reading and mathematics. Since then, you have provided training to improve teachers' subject knowledge and ensured that teachers share clear criteria with pupils, so that they know how to improve their own work. Teachers also give more precise feedback to pupils. This is evident in pupils' 'Big Write' books, which are a good record of pupils' maturing writing skills as they move through the school. Many pupils take advantage of the 'betters' class at lunchtime to review and edit their work, in the light of the feedback they receive.

These approaches have helped to raise expectations across the school. Teachers expect a lot of their pupils and set work which is suitably challenging. Pupils are keen to do their best. They present their work to a high standard and take great care with their handwriting. Teachers maintain a sharp focus on technical writing skills and this is ensuring that standards of spelling, punctuation and grammar are high. Provisional results from national curriculum tests last summer show that nine out of 10 pupils attained the expected standard in both the writing and the grammar, punctuation and spelling tests. This was well above the national average and shows that the vast majority of pupils leave the school with the necessary skills to be successful in secondary education.

In the last inspection, you were also asked to improve the quality of teaching further. Since then, there have been several changes to the teaching staff, as some experienced colleagues have moved on. Teachers new to the school told me that they have flourished because their induction was excellent and the support they have received from their experienced colleagues has fully met their needs. Teachers have benefited from good opportunities to work with other local schools. As a result, they feel confident in assessing pupils' progress and they use this information well to tailor the work they provide for their classes. You and the governors deploy your teachers and teaching assistants well so that extra help is provided for classes where it is most needed.

Safeguarding is effective.

Pupils are safe because you ensure that all adults who work in the school are carefully vetted, receive regular training and understand the procedures to follow if they have a concern. Governors ensure that thorough checks are made on the security of the site and that risk assessments are completed for the wide range of activities in and beyond the school. All parents who responded to Ofsted's questionnaire are confident that the school is a safe and secure place.

Although you deal with relatively few child protection cases, you act quickly when necessary and involve external agencies appropriately. You have introduced an effective system for recording all relevant information, and staff use this to ensure that good-quality records are maintained.

The curriculum also helps pupils to be aware of their own safety. For example, there are good arrangements in place to ensure that pupils understand the potential risks when online. You have well-thought-out systems in place to monitor pupils' use of the tablet computers you provide for them and this is ensuring that pupils learn to use digital media responsibly. Older pupils are trained to act as fire marshals and run a lunchtime surgery for other pupils who may want to talk about safety or bullying concerns. However, the school's very positive ethos ensures that incidents of bullying are extremely rare.

Inspection findings

- This is an improving school. Underpinning the improvements in academic outcomes are the excellent behaviour and very positive attitudes pupils show. Pupils strive to do their best in response to the praise and rewards available. The school reception area displays many trophies that celebrate pupils' achievements, attendance and participation in competitions. Teaching of physical education and after-school activities place a strong emphasis on teamwork. The school's house system is an effective vehicle for promoting competition. 'Superstar Assemblies', 'Golden Nugget' awards and the 'Kindness Cup' are all ways in which adults spot and reward the good things pupils do. Collectively, these approaches create a very positive 'can-do' culture in which pupils flourish. This is reflected in the improvement in overall attendance and the reduction in the number of pupils who missed school too often last year.
- During the inspection, I focused on the quality of education in early years because the proportion of children attaining the standards expected by the end of Reception Year had, in recent years, been below average. I found the early years unit is currently undergoing some changes. The previous, experienced leader left the school in July and new leadership arrangements are in place. A consultation to review staff working patterns for the benefit of the children has been completed and new arrangements for the teaching in Nursery will commence from January 2018. The development of the early years provision was a major priority in your school improvement plan last year. Across the year, you sharpened the way in which reading and writing skills were taught and ensured that more was done to stimulate children's speaking and listening skills. Teachers successfully focused on accelerating the progress of boys and disadvantaged children. The teaching of phonics began earlier and new resources were purchased to increase the variety of approaches that teachers could use. Parents are now encouraged to stay and work with their children at the start of sessions. Pleasingly, the proportion of children attaining the expected standard by the end of Reception Year rose sharply to be in line with that seen nationally. Better support is needed, however, for the new early years leader. Although you and the governors have great confidence in her leadership skills, her understanding of good practice in early years education would benefit from links with other strong providers, so that she can sustain the improvements seen last year.
- I also looked closely at the progress of pupils currently in key stage 2. I found that lessons move at a brisk pace and challenge pupils to think deeply. Teachers skilfully tailor the work they set for pupils with different starting points in both English and mathematics lessons. Each morning is carefully structured to ensure that all classes spend time honing basic spelling, punctuation and grammar skills, practising mental mathematics and developing good analytical reading skills. The evidence in their books shows that pupils are continually productive and maintain high standards in the presentation of their work. Furthermore, the quality of their work across the wider curriculum is strong. Topics introduce new knowledge and understanding in a good level of depth. Technology is used well, both in school and at home, to research subject content and to develop fluency in English and mathematical skills. However, there are not enough opportunities for pupils to write at length. Too many writing activities within English lessons and across the

wider curriculum are relatively short and do not develop pupils' ability to create more extended narratives.

- Consistently strong teaching is improving outcomes at the end of key stage 2. In 2017, provisional results of national curriculum tests show that over three quarters of pupils attained the expected standard in reading, writing and mathematics combined. Last year, disadvantaged pupils made more progress than other pupils in the school and the few pupils who have special educational needs and/or disabilities made good progress. As a result, gaps in attainment between different groups of pupils are narrowing.
- The governing body provides effective oversight of the school. Governors are kept well informed through your detailed termly reports, and their frequent visits to check on the most important aspects of the school. You and the chair of the governing body meet regularly to review the findings of monitoring visits and to gauge the impact of leaders' work. As a result, you and other leaders feel well supported and firmly held to account. The governors' standards committee scrutinises tracking information at each assessment point across the year. The rigour of this approach helps to ensure that resources are deployed effectively where they are most needed.

Next steps for the school

Leaders and those responsible for governance should ensure that:

- appropriate support and training are provided for the new early years leader, so that the quality of provision can be accurately evaluated and recent improvements in outcomes can be sustained
- there are more frequent opportunities for pupils to write at length, expressing their ideas convincingly and structuring their writing appropriately.

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

Yours sincerely

Chris Smith
Her Majesty's Inspector

Information about the inspection

During this one-day inspection, I met with you, the early years leader, two teachers and a group of governors, including the chair of the governing body. I also met with a group of pupils and listened to some of the younger pupils read. Together, you and I visited lessons in each phase of the school to look at the impact of your work to develop the quality of teaching. During lesson visits, I sampled pupils' books and

talked to pupils about their learning and progress. I looked in detail at some pupils' work in order to evaluate the progress pupils had made over time. I also walked around the school to look at pupils' behaviour and conduct and at the security of the site. I met with a group of parents and looked at the 28 responses to Ofsted's online questionnaire (Parent View). I also considered the nine responses to Ofsted's staff survey and at your own surveys of parents' and pupils' opinions. I looked at a range of documentation, including the school's self-evaluation and improvement planning, policies, child protection records and information available on the school website. I focused particularly on the progress of pupils currently in the school, the progress of children in early years and the effectiveness of leaders' work to improve the quality of teaching. I also looked closely at the work of governors and the effectiveness of safeguarding arrangements.