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Mrs Nicola Kearney
Headteacher
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Dear Mrs Kearney

Short inspection of Eaves Primary School

Following my visit to the school on 31 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 January 2013.

This school continues to be good.

You and the leadership team have maintained the good quality of education in the school since the last inspection. Parents describe Eaves as 'more than a school, it's a community.' A harmonious atmosphere pervades your school and parents describe you and the staff as 'caring, nurturing and also challenging the children to do their best both academically and with their confidence and behaviour'.

You and your deputy headteacher work tenaciously to improve the school. Together, you have an accurate and reflective view of the school's strengths and priorities. You have high expectations of what you and your staff can achieve. The chair of the governing body and other governors whom I met are well aware of all aspects of school life and what could be made even better. They bring with them a wide range of skills with which they support and challenge you to make improvements. With the governors you adeptly provide staff with a wide range of high-quality training opportunities that help them in all aspects of their work, ensuring that the quality of teaching is good or better. Senior leaders encourage pupils and staff alike to aim high. As a result, pupils develop a love of learning and are ambitious. You, together with governors, provide staff with opportunities to further their careers and consequently staff morale is high.

Since the previous inspection, you and your leaders have adjusted the curriculum. You constantly look for ways in which you can ensure that every pupil fully engages with learning. You and your staff provide a varied range of experiences, including

many after-school clubs, out-of-school activities and trips that further enrich the curriculum, provide new experiences and broaden the horizons of pupils.

At the previous inspection in 2013, inspectors asked you to improve the quality of teaching and improve pupils' progress to outstanding. Not only have you ensured the sharing of best practice across the school, you have provided opportunities to see best practice in other schools. You have developed a highly skilled workforce, ensuring that the quality of teaching is usually good or better. You, and members of staff, have developed skills that are recognised as best practice and, as a result, you and several staff provide support for other schools.

Inspectors also asked you in the previous inspection to make sure that teachers clearly explain to pupils what they are going to learn in lessons so that the purpose of activities is clearly understood. Leaders monitor the quality of teaching, learning and assessment, which has led to pupils knowing precisely the purpose of the activities in lessons. During our learning walks it was clear that teachers plan lessons well, ensuring that pupils have a clear understanding of what they are expected to achieve within a given timescale. As a result, pupils' progress and attainment continue to improve.

Finally, inspectors asked you to make sure that the work set for the most able pupils is always hard enough to make sure that they make as much progress as possible. Results in 2017 show that all groups of pupils excelled in both their progress and attainment in mathematics. The proportion of boys, and also of girls, reaching the higher standard in mathematics by the end of key stage 2 was higher than the national average in 2017 for both of these groups. In reading, the proportion of boys reaching the higher standard was slightly higher than the national average and the proportion of girls reaching the higher standard was in line with the national average. Reaching the higher standard in writing proved more difficult for boys than for girls in 2017. However, boys' results were considerably better than in 2016, when their writing was in the lowest 10% of schools nationally. Leaders know that raising attainment in reading and writing is a priority for the school and you have made changes to address this.

You and your staff continue to ensure that children get off to a flying start in the early years. Parents told me how well their children have settled into Nursery and Reception classes and this was evident during the inspection. Parents told me they 'love the "Learn in Class" sessions as they give a valuable insight into how literacy and numeracy are taught.' During the inspection many parents and grandparents took the opportunity to join in with their children's or grandchildren's learning. While a very small minority of parents raised concerns about homework, you are rightly keen to ensure that they encourage learning outside school.

Safeguarding is effective.

In your role as the designated safeguarding leader, and together with your two deputy designated safeguarding leaders, you work tirelessly to ensure that all safeguarding arrangements meet requirements. You make sure that staff fully

understand their duty and follow systems and procedures for raising concerns. Together with the office manager, you ensure that all necessary checks are made on the suitability of staff to work with children. When I arrived at the start of the inspection I saw clearly the effectiveness of procedures to check on those visiting school.

You ensure that the promotion of safeguarding throughout the school has a high profile. You provide staff with training that is up to date so that they and members of the governing body understand the current guidance. You, and the deputy designated safeguarding leaders, are prompt in making referrals to the local authority. Together, you meticulously follow up all concerns raised by staff and make sure that pupils are kept safe from potential harm. You work very effectively with a wide range of external agencies to provide expertise to support pupils' welfare when necessary. The leadership team has ensured that all safeguarding arrangements are fit for purpose and records are detailed and of a high quality.

Inspection findings

- The first line of enquiry that I explored during this inspection was how effectively writing is taught across key stage 1 and key stage 2. This was a weaker area in 2016 and 2017, particularly for boys and disadvantaged pupils. You and your leadership team have effective systems for the checking of the quality of teaching and learning and the assessment of writing. Your literacy leader explained that when you introduced the new curriculum extended writing opportunities on a weekly basis ceased. You closely monitored this and leaders made a decision to reintroduce opportunities for extended writing each week. In addition, you have invested in a new writing resource using technology and this is clearly inspiring boys to write for a range of audiences and purposes. Pupils have the opportunity to comment on their peer's work from other schools and to use ideas for their own writing.
- Middle leaders carry out focused lesson observations and check on the progress that pupils make in their books. This is bringing about improvements in pupils' progress in writing. Leaders recognised that pupils' handwriting skills were not as good as they could be and this is a whole-school focus. The introduction of a consistent approach to handwriting is paying off. Teachers ensure that work in pupils' books shows their pride in their presentation of work. Teachers have built in more opportunities for pupils to write longer pieces of work and these are now embedded across the curriculum, particularly through topic work. You ensure that additional support is provided for any pupil who starts to fall behind.
- The second line of enquiry was to check on the quality of the teaching of reading, as progress in 2017 was not as strong as in mathematics. Teachers and teaching assistants are highly skilled in the teaching of phonics. Pupils clearly enjoy being challenged to work out unfamiliar words. In Year 1, the teacher planned activities to fully engage pupils and their parents or grandparents to work out the meaning of words using their phonics skills. Pupils then placed the words under the appropriate columns of either 'objects', 'people' or 'places'. Pupils make good progress in learning to read using their phonics skills. In guided

reading in Year 2, the teachers and teaching assistants worked with small groups, checking very effectively on pupils' reading skills. Adults asked pertinent questions, encouraging pupils to retell the story in their own words. Pupils made sensible predictions about what might happen later in the story. Teachers and teaching assistants effectively model the thought processes required to develop comprehension skills. You have introduced a greater use of poetry, which the deputy headteacher and I observed in Year 5. Highly effective questioning by both the teacher and the teaching assistant ensured that pupils gave considerable thought to the meaning of the phrase 'if you can keep your head' from the Rudyard Kipling poem 'If'. You are prioritising developing the skills of pupils to write succinctly about their understanding of what they have read in preparation for end-of-key-stage tests.

- Next, we considered the impact of learning in the early years. Teachers' assessments of children when they join school demonstrate that skills in speech and language are lower than those expected for their age. In 2017, the proportion reaching a good level of development was higher than the national average, although only half of the disadvantaged pupils reached this level. Having seen the very strong teaching of phonics in the early years, we looked at the progress that children make using the evidence from their learning journeys. Teachers plan activities and opportunities for children to find out things for themselves both in the classroom and outdoors. Adults encourage children to talk about their interests and ideas, and for those who find this difficult, an external speech-and-language specialist provides additional support to speed up children's development in this area. All children continue to make strong progress in Nursery and Reception classes.
- This school is a haven for all pupils. Parents and grandparents say that the support given to pupils and families is 'amazing' and rightly recognise that the work you and your dedicated staff do is instrumental in developing the well-being of pupils and reducing barriers to learning. Pupils' behaviour is exemplary. They show a great deal of respect towards each other and the adults around them. Pupils develop a love of learning during their time at Eaves and are very well prepared for the next stage in their education.

Next steps for the school

Leaders and those responsible for governance should ensure that:

- the drive to improve the quality of writing, including handwriting, continues so that more boys reach the higher standard across all key stage 1 and key stage 2 classes
- teachers develop pupils' skills in recording succinctly their understanding of what they read
- more disadvantaged pupils reach a good level of development by the time they leave Reception.

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

Yours sincerely

Naomi Taylor
Her Majesty's Inspector

Information about the inspection

During this inspection I observed teaching and learning across the school alongside the headteacher and deputy headteacher. I listened to pupils read in key stage 1 and key stage 2. I also scrutinised a range of pupils' work. I held meetings with senior leaders, middle leaders, members of the governing body, the designated safeguarding leader and the deputy designated safeguarding leaders. In addition, I took account of 17 responses to Ofsted's online questionnaire, Parent View, and considered 18 free-text responses from parents. I spoke informally with parents at the school gates to seek their views and I also spoke with pupils. I reviewed 80 responses to Ofsted's online pupil questionnaire and 28 responses to Ofsted's staff survey. During the inspection, I reviewed a range of school documents. These included: the school's development plans and self-evaluation documents; minutes of the governing body meetings; safeguarding documentation and various records relating to pupils' behaviour and attendance.