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19 December 2017

Mr Steven Badcott
Executive Headteacher
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Dear Mr Badcott

Short inspection of Halberton Primary School

Following my visit to the school on 5 December 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 2014.

This school continues to be good.

The leadership team has maintained the good quality of education in the school since the last inspection. You and your colleagues have created a caring school where pupils are happy, feel valued and achieve well. You are providing strong leadership, setting high expectations for teaching and learning. Your precise understanding of the strengths and weaknesses of the school is essential to continuous school development. Consequently, you have successfully tackled the areas for improvement in the previous inspection, while maintaining the school's strengths.

Governors work closely with the school. They know what the school does well and know which areas require strengthening. They provide you with effective support in fulfilling the aims and ambitions for pupils and offer you clear strategic direction. You are meticulous in your analysis of the school's performance. Your views are well founded and evidenced. As a result, leaders and governors are ensuring that the school's vision of helping pupils to be the best that they can be is realised.

You have established a strong team spirit amongst staff and a shared determination to enable pupils to grow up to be responsible adults with high aspirations. All staff who responded to the survey said that they enjoy working at this school and are proud to be a staff member. They unanimously agree that they are well supported and treated fairly. Pupils behave well. They make strong progress because of their highly positive attitudes to learning.

Parental feedback is overwhelmingly positive about the efforts made by staff to ensure that their children are happy, safe and well looked after. All parents who responded to the parent survey agreed that the school is well led and managed. They would recommend the school to another parent. Parents say that staff are supportive and well focused on the needs of individuals. For example, a comment written by one parent, typical of many, said, 'This friendly, welcoming school goes above and beyond to ensure each child's happiness and progression.'

Safeguarding is effective.

You have created a strong culture around keeping pupils safe. All safeguarding arrangements are fit for purpose. You have ensured that all staff are appropriately trained. Consequently, they understand and implement safeguarding policies and procedures effectively. They have the suitable expertise to recognise the potential signs of abuse quickly. You work effectively with outside agencies and are tenacious in securing appropriate and timely responses to your concerns. Safer recruitment procedures meet requirements.

You know the needs of vulnerable pupils and their families. There are clear systems in place to identify pupils who may be at risk of harm. My discussions with pupils revealed that they feel safe and have a trusted adult they can go to with a worry or a concern. They say that adults always do their best to solve their problems.

Part of our discussions around safeguarding focused on pupils' attendance. Published information for the academic year 2015 to 2016 shows that attendance was lower than the national average for pupils in some significant groups, including those entitled to free school meals and those who have special educational needs (SEN) and/or disabilities. You have put a range of measures in place to effectively check and improve pupils' attendance. You ensure that poor attendance is not allowed to go unchallenged. These actions are proving to be successful because attendance is improving significantly for individuals and groups.

Inspection findings

- My first line of enquiry focused on evaluating leaders' actions in ensuring that pupils, including the most able, make strong progress in writing at key stage 2. Pupils' progress in writing in the 2017 national curriculum assessments was not as strong as their progress in reading and mathematics. Consequently, teachers are using a range of strategies to further raise pupils' achievement in writing. Support in lessons encourages pupils to think more deeply about their work and how this can be further improved. Staff skilfully question pupils to encourage them to further elaborate on their ideas. This provides valuable stimulus for writing, setting high expectations for what pupils can achieve.
- Evidence in pupils' books, including the most able, shows that writing is progressing well. Pupils successfully acquire a range of age-appropriate skills. They maintain good standards in the presentation of their writing and take pride in their work. The most able pupils make strong progress from their prior starting

points, demonstrating characteristics of writing at the higher standard. For example, their mastery of a wide range of writing devices and techniques ensures that the reader is captivated by their creativity and imagination.

- Pupils demonstrate appropriate skills in checking and editing their writing in order to make improvements to their work. They are confident in selecting well-chosen vocabulary to heighten interest and engage the reader. However, you know that pupils need further opportunities to consolidate and develop their skills in spelling, punctuation and grammar. This will enable them to experience greater levels of success in their writing.
- I also focused on evaluating leaders' actions in supporting pupils who have SEN and/or disabilities, including disadvantaged pupils. Leaders have a detailed understanding of the needs of these pupils. They ensure that robust systems ensure the timely referral of pupils who may have barriers to their learning. The school has a range of well-embedded strategies in place to support pupils with emotional and social needs. Consequently, the requirements of these pupils are being met effectively.
- Staff receive appropriate training in order to ensure that they can provide pupils who have SEN and/or disabilities with the right support. Teaching assistants are deployed effectively to support pupils with specific learning requirements. They focus attentively on the needs of individuals and provide bespoke support. As a result, pupils maintain a good level of engagement and experience success in their learning.
- Staff are alert to the needs of pupils who have SEN and/or disabilities, including disadvantaged pupils. They respond quickly to clarify key learning points and address potential misunderstandings in lessons, to ensure that no pupil falls behind. Leaders use assessment information and observations to check the appropriateness of the help and support for pupils who have SEN and/or disabilities. This ensures that actions are having the desired effect on improving learning outcomes over time. Evidence in books shows that these pupils make good progress from their individual starting points.
- My final line of enquiry evaluated how well leaders are demonstrating the capacity to drive improvement and the effectiveness of governors in holding them to account. Leaders are outward looking. They are highly committed to providing staff with purposeful and appropriately targeted training that is rooted in raising outcomes for pupils. School improvement plans are of a high quality. Comprehensive information is included, clearly detailing how each objective in the plan will be met.
- School monitoring documentation shows that leaders provide staff with precise guidance on how to further improve their teaching practice. Leaders acknowledge the need to extend staff responsibility in this area by providing middle leaders with appropriate training to undertake their roles.
- Governors hold leaders to account for all aspects of the school's work. They make regular visits to the school and use concise and accurate information provided by leaders to check that school improvement actions are effective. Governors'

documentation shows that appropriate challenge is provided to ensure that leaders' work has the desired impact on improving outcomes for pupils.

- Leaders and governors demonstrate strong capacity to drive further school improvement.

Next steps for the school

Leaders and those responsible for governance should ensure that:

- the profile of spelling, punctuation and grammar is further raised across the school so that pupils can apply their skills effectively in their writing
- middle leaders receive appropriate training to carry out their clearly defined roles and responsibilities, securing strong outcomes for pupils.

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

Neil Swait
Ofsted Inspector

Information about the inspection

During this inspection, I spoke with you, staff members, four representatives of the governing body, a local authority adviser and pupils from across the school. I made visits to lessons to observe pupils' learning and to scrutinise their work.

I considered a range of documentary evidence, which included the school's development plans, attendance and monitoring records and safeguarding documentation.

In addition, I took account of 30 responses to the Parent View online survey and five responses to the staff survey. There were no responses from the pupils' survey to take into consideration.