

26 January 2018

Mrs Siobhan Rouse  
Headteacher  
Harston and Newton Community Primary School  
High Street  
Harston  
Cambridge  
Cambridgeshire  
CB22 7PX

Dear Mrs Rouse

### **Short inspection of Harston and Newton Community Primary School**

Following my visit to the school on 17 January 2018, 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 March 2014.

#### **This school continues to be good.**

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

Since you took up post in April 2016, you have built on the school's many strengths. You have successfully maintained a strong team ethos in school where staff work together well and feel fully supported to improve. You are setting high expectations of staff and pupils.

There is no complacency and there has been a good pace to recent change. You and your comparatively new leadership team are securing improvement across the school. Together, you have identified effectively the strengths and weaknesses of the school. You communicate your vision to the staff team clearly. Staff are supportive of what you are trying to achieve. They know what they have to do in order to improve provision further.

The governing body knows the school well. You give it a good amount of information so that it can provide the right level of support and challenge.

Your pupils are a credit to the school. They bloom socially because they are encouraged to take responsibility and to model, in their own behaviour and attitudes, the good values shown by staff. Consequently, they are polite and courteous and get on well together. They happily talk about their learning to visitors and behave sensibly in class or when moving around school. They play together

happily at breaktimes, showing concern for each other, following closely school rules and instructions from supervising adults.

You give pupils many opportunities to take responsibility and they take these well. The school council plays an active part in helping you to identify where improvement is needed. For example, it is currently working with you to develop a quiet area on the playground for pupils who do not want to play games.

One of the things that your pupils especially like is your sports provision. As one commented: 'We do lots of fun things!' I agree that this is a real strength of your curriculum. The school has recently become one of the first schools in the country to receive a Platinum School Sportsmark award. Pupils enjoy being taught by specialist coaches in sports lessons and clubs and they are able to participate in a good number of competitions for their age. There is a high range of participation in physical activity beyond class lessons. Consequently, the school is very successfully helping pupils to live healthy lifestyles.

Music is also promoted particularly well. A specialist teacher provides effective support to the school. This enables a high proportion of pupils to learn to play an instrument or to take part in public performances both in the local community or further afield.

Parents and carers appreciate the work that leaders and all school staff do to ensure that all pupils enjoy school. They typically make comments such as, 'I have been extremely happy with the way my child has settled and am impressed with the pastoral care he is given', 'My daughter is very proud of her school' and 'There is a strong culture of kindness and respect.'

You are aware that parents would like more information about their children's progress. You are rightly currently working with your staff to provide this information in a clearer format in the future.

### **Safeguarding is effective.**

You have ensured that safeguarding arrangements are fit for purpose and that records are detailed and of good quality. You make sure that all staff receive high-quality training. As a school, you work closely with a range of external agencies and take decisive action when necessary to ensure that pupils are kept safe.

The staff and parents who completed the Ofsted questionnaires agreed that the school keeps pupils safe. Pupils also say that they feel safe. They say that there is always an adult on hand to talk to if they have any problems or concerns.

Pupils learn about how to avoid dangers when using the internet and are clear about the importance of keeping safe when crossing the very busy road that runs through the village.

## Inspection findings

- At the start of the inspection, we met together to confirm the focus for my day in school.
- My first focus was pupils' progress in writing, especially for boys. I wanted to look at this because historically pupils have made slower progress in writing than in reading and mathematics.
- This was an area that you have already identified as needing improvement. I could see that you have made a good start to tackling this, and the gap in attainment between reading and writing, especially for boys, is being closed more quickly than in the past.
- This is being achieved through a well-considered range of strategies. For example, teachers are making sharper use of assessment information on pupils' progress so that those who need more support are given it quickly to help them catch up. In English lessons, there is a greater focus on applying spelling and punctuation skills in extended writing. Teachers are making good use of an appropriate range of books to encourage a love of writing, especially for boys.
- My second line of enquiry looked at how well phonics is taught in key stage 1. I wanted to look at this because the proportion of pupils reaching the expected level in national screenings at the end of Year 1 has been below average for the last three years. However, there is a much-improved picture in the current year. Phonics is now being introduced earlier in the early years. New systems for checking pupils' attainment and progress are being used effectively to identify and respond to gaps in pupils' knowledge.
- I saw, and pupils told me, that phonics teaching is fun and engaging. Pupils respond well to the expectations of teachers in the Reception class and Years 1 and 2. Pupils are currently making good progress in improving their phonics skills.
- The last inspection identified that there was not always enough challenge for pupils in lessons. I explored this as my third line of enquiry.
- I found that teaching ensures that pupils make good progress most of the time in the early years and in key stages 1 and 2 in English and mathematics.
- Teachers plan carefully and provide work that generally takes good account of differing needs. They have responded well to the challenges of having mixed-age classes in key stage 2 and this does not have an adverse effect on pupils' learning. However, after visiting some lessons and looking at books together, we agreed that teachers sometimes miss opportunities to move on the learning of the most able pupils more quickly. This happens, for example, when pupils have completed a task and are ready for a new activity.
- My fourth line of enquiry looked at the impact of the leadership team on pupils' work in science, history and geography. We agreed to look at this because it is something you have identified in your school improvement plan as a focus for the current year.

- I found that the good work seen in English and mathematics is not reflected consistently in pupils' science and topic (history and geography) books. While some work, for example in history in Year 6, is of good quality, this is not always the case. In some classes, teachers do not expect enough of the pupils and they do not give them enough support and guidance to help them improve.
- You told me that until recently, leaders have focused mostly on improving provision in English and mathematics. Consequently, middle leaders in science, history and geography have not yet had enough opportunity to monitor provision. This means that some weaknesses have not been picked up quickly enough. We agreed that these subjects should be a priority for improvement over the next year and beyond.
- As part of my line of enquiry on safeguarding, I looked in particular detail at procedures in 'Kiddiwinks', the on-site pre-school that is managed by the governing body.
- I scrutinised documentation and safeguarding records, held discussions with the manager and checked that staff understood their responsibilities well enough. These activities confirmed to me that the pre-school has robust safeguarding procedures that are closely aligned to those followed by the school. I saw in my observations that children in the pre-school are well cared for. They are happy in the setting and are given calm and sensitive support to help them take part in an interesting range of activities both indoors and outdoors.

### **Next steps for the school**

Leaders and those responsible for governance should ensure that:

- teaching always provides the right level of challenge for the most able pupils
- there is a stronger focus on monitoring work in science, history and geography and ensuring that is of consistently high quality across the school.

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

Yours sincerely

Mike Capper  
**Ofsted Inspector**

### **Information about the inspection**

Evidence collected on this inspection included:

- observations of teaching and learning across the school during learning walks with you and the deputy headteacher
- meetings with school leaders and members of the governing body

- discussions with parents at the start of the school day and the scrutiny of 53 responses to Ofsted's online questionnaire, 'Parent View'
- an analysis of 9 responses to the Ofsted staff survey
- consideration of a range of information supplied by the school, including checks on the quality of teaching, the school's development plan, school policies and records relating to attendance and safeguarding procedures
- listening to some pupils reading in lessons, a scrutiny of school assessment information and pupils' books in different subjects from the current academic year.