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2 March 2018

Mrs Lizzie Blount
Croft Primary School
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Dear Mrs Blount

Short inspection of Croft Primary School

Following my visit to the school on 15 February 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 October 2013.

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 deputy headteacher lead a happy and inclusive school where pupils enjoy their lessons and get on well together. You set high expectations for learning and for pupils' behaviour, and know the school well. You have set out, in a clear document, the reasons why you judge the school to be a consistently good one. These reasons are taken from a wide range of convincing evidence. You also set out why the school is not yet outstanding and, as a result, have written a development plan to improve aspects of the school that are not as strong. This plan includes, correctly, action to increase the proportion of pupils who attain a good level of development at the end of Reception. It also sets out measures so that more pupils, particularly the disadvantaged, attain a greater depth of understanding.

You ensure that teaching is typically good. Lessons are characterised by lessons that pupils say are interesting and challenging. As a result, pupils pay attention and work hard. Classrooms are purposeful, positive spaces where pupils learn well. I saw, for instance, pupils in Year 6 keen to show their teacher that they knew what a suffix was, and how they had a good understanding of different tenses. Meanwhile, pupils in Year 2 were busy writing imaginative poems about love after being inspired by a recent visit by a professional poet.

You are supported well by effective subject leaders who monitor the quality of teaching by visiting their colleagues' classrooms to see learning in action, and to look at pupils' work in different subjects. Because of the checks they make, these

leaders were also able to explain to me, accurately, what needs to happen next to drive up the quality of teaching further. These leaders explained that, for example, teachers needed to consistently give pupils sufficient opportunities to reason and to problem-solve mathematically. Leaders also told me how their monitoring had shown how teachers needed to give pupils better guidance to use the words and phrases they read in subjects other than English in order to explain their thinking more precisely when they write.

These leaders assist their colleagues well by, for example, organising staff meetings to help staff improve their teaching of reading. As a result, those colleagues who are new to the profession or feel less confident are helped to improve. The large number of staff I met during my visit told me enthusiastically how you are mindful of their well-being, and support them to undertake their role. They also described to me how the strong sense of mutual support they feel is central to the school's success. Staff work together well, give each other advice, and ensure that they communicate well. They particularly wanted to tell me about how teachers pass good-quality information on when pupils move from one class to another, so that teachers do not need to find out for themselves what their new pupils can do.

You have attended well to all the areas that inspectors identified as needing improvement from the last inspection. For example, time is now used well in lessons. Pupils I met explained how teachers will show them, before they commence their work, what task they must begin once they have completed the first activity. As a result, time is not lost in lessons. Outcomes are improving in reading because you and your staff are developing in pupils a real enjoyment of reading. Pupils explained to me how they visit the school's library very regularly. They also told me enthusiastically how the school's system of rewarding them for the number of books they read makes them want to read as much as possible. This includes not only stories and poems, but a wide variety of non-fiction too. While many of these are linked to the topics pupils learn about, such as Destination Outer Space in Year 2, and All Change in Year 6, pupils also told me how they enjoyed reading about subjects such as The Romans, highwaymen, and seals.

The governing body is committed to ensuring that all pupils receive a good education, and they visit the school regularly to see it in action or to meet with leaders. You give them good levels of information overall. However, they explained to me that you have not yet provided for them sufficient details about the impact of your spending of the pupil premium for this academic year.

Safeguarding is effective.

You have ensured that all safeguarding arrangements are fit for purpose. You and your staff are vigilant for any signs that a pupil could be being exploited or abused. They were able to describe to me, confidently, the wide range of signs that may indicate that someone is harming a child. Staff know their greatest responsibility is to report without delay any suspicions they have. You, in turn, keep good and detailed records, and involve quickly external agencies, including social care, where needed.

A very large majority of parents and carers would recommend the school to others. A small number who responded to Ofsted's online survey, Parent View, expressed the view that behaviour was not always dealt with effectively. However, school records I examined show that you and your staff are supporting the many pupils with complex needs well, including those who find difficulties in managing their own behaviour. This is helping these pupils' behaviour to improve over time. The large number of pupils whom I met during my visit, from a wide range of year groups, explained how behaviour was good. They confirmed that they and their younger peers all feel safe, and that staff consistently deal with any issues quickly, fairly and effectively. Pupils are also taught about a wide range of risks. For example, pupils in Year 1 and the Reception class have recently taken part in 'Beep Beep Day', to show them how they must always cross a road safely. A recent article in the school's weekly bulletin, written by pupils in Year 5, explains how they have helped younger pupils to stay safe online.

Inspection findings

- My visit focused upon the school's actions to improve achievement in the early years, along with the reasons why pupils make such strong progress in writing. In addition, I looked into what leaders were doing to improve attainment in both reading and mathematics so that more pupils attain a greater depth of understanding by the time they leave for secondary school.
- Children begin school in the Reception class with skills that are below, or well below, those that are found typically in children of the same age. Although children make good overall progress in the early years, smaller proportions than the national average attain a good level of development. Children's skills in writing are weakest. Staff know that accelerating children's attainment in this area would mean that more children are well prepared for Year 1. Although leaders are therefore now providing more opportunities for children in the Reception class to write, these are recent and are not yet sufficient to result in children consistently making brisk progress in this area of learning. There are only limited opportunities for children to write in the outdoor environment.
- Pupils make consistently excellent progress in writing across key stages 1 and 2. This is because teachers give pupils plenty of time to reflect and edit their work. They also ensure that pupils have access to a wide range of texts. As such, pupils' writing becomes imaginative and confident.
- Though pupils' progress is at least at average levels in both reading and mathematics, it is not as rapid as it is in writing. As a result, not enough pupils, and particularly the most able and the disadvantaged, achieve the higher standards. Pupils' skills in number are good. However, their workbooks show that, though teachers are more recently giving them increasing opportunities to problem-solve mathematically and to reason, this is not yet embedded across classes. Pupils' skills in phonics are secure. However, they do not yet attain as highly in reading because, across the curriculum, pupils do not use the vocabulary they encounter effectively to express themselves when they write their answers.

- Minutes of the governing body show that they challenge you and senior leaders well overall. However, you have not provided them quickly enough with clear and measurable information about the effectiveness of the different spending of the pupil premium. As a result, they cannot be sure that all the money is being as well spent as possible so that the academic attainment of disadvantaged pupils rises as much as possible.
- Pupils' attendance is close to the national average. You do all you can to work with the families of those pupils who do not come to school regularly enough, so that their attendance improves over time.

Next steps for the school

Leaders and those responsible for governance should ensure that:

- children in the early years write frequently, including in the outdoor environment, so that more attain a good level of development
- pupils, and especially the most able and the disadvantaged, are taught how to reason and problem-solve mathematically and how to explain, across the curriculum, their thinking in writing, so that more pupils achieve the higher standards
- senior leaders provide governors with timely, precise information on how the different types of support are helping disadvantaged pupils to make accelerated progress from their starting points.

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

Yours sincerely

Roary Pownall
Her Majesty's Inspector

Information about the inspection

During the inspection, I met you and shared my lines of enquiry. I also met with representatives of the governing body, the deputy headteacher, subject leaders for mathematics and for English, and the head of early years. I considered the responses of parents to Parent View, and all free-text comments, along with the school's most recent questionnaires for parents and for pupils. I met with a large number of staff at the end of the day to discuss their views on the school and its leadership. We visited classes across the school together. I looked at samples of pupils' work from different year groups and abilities, including the early years. I observed pupils' behaviour in lessons and met with a large group of them at breaktime. I viewed a range of documents, including leaders' evaluation of the

school's current performance and its plans for further improvement. I considered a number of policy documents, including those for safeguarding. I examined the school's website to check that it meets requirements on the publication of specified information.