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Mrs Rebecca Perman
Headteacher
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Dear Mrs Perman

Short inspection of Eastwood Primary School and Nursery

Following my visit to the school on 6 March 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 February 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 senior leadership team are dedicated and committed and uncompromising in your desire for the school to continually improve. You have a clear vision for the school and the community it serves. You have developed strong relationships with staff and established an ethos where pupils can and will achieve. You are relentless in your ambition for the school and you always put the pupils and their families at the heart of what you and your staff do. You and your leadership team have successfully dealt with the areas for improvement identified in the last inspection report.

Together, you have all created a nurturing and supportive environment in which pupils and their families feel cared for and well supported. Every effort goes into giving pupils the opportunity to thrive and develop into confident role models who contribute positively to society. This support is not confined to inside the school. Varied strategies and systems to help families in the community who are vulnerable are having a positive effect. The family support workers play a critical role in this work, and the level of trust between staff and families is superb. Parents' and carers' comments such as: 'The most wonderful school with the best teachers. This school has changed both my children's lives for the better. I cannot fault this school at all' and 'A fantastic homely school with a real family feel' echo the feelings of the overwhelming majority of parents.

Governors are extremely capable and skilled. They have a good understanding of the school and provide an effective blend of challenge and support. They are proactive and use school visits to check that the school improvement plan priorities are being implemented effectively. For example, governors have challenged school leaders about pupils' attendance. As a result, they have been part of a drive to improve this key priority.

You have ensured that Nursery and Reception children get off to a good start in the early years. It is a welcoming and engaging environment for children. Staff plan interesting and challenging learning activities so that children make good progress. The outdoor environment is used well to stimulate children's curiosity. Children are settled and happy and socialise well.

You have ensured that the school's curriculum is interesting and engages all groups of pupils. Your staff plan educational visits and topics that stimulate and excite pupils. Classrooms and corridors support the curriculum well as every available space is used to showcase pupils' work. For example, your staff have successfully turned corridors into Harry Potter's common room, the Big Friendly Giant (BFG)'s dream cupboard and a beautiful under-the-ocean theme. Initiatives such as these ensure that pupils experience an enriched curriculum. Teachers plan lessons across the curriculum that involve first-hand experiences. Pupils' engagement and progress are strong where this is the case.

Safeguarding is effective.

The leadership team has ensured that all safeguarding arrangements are fit for purpose. As a result, there is strong culture of safeguarding, and care permeates the school. Leaders are tenacious in ensuring that the school and external agencies keep pupils safe.

Pupils are taught how to keep themselves safe through, for example, topics that are covered in weekly assemblies. These include how to stay safe when using the internet and playing online games. Pupils are adamant that there is no bullying in the school, although from time to time they do fall out. They said that their teachers will always help them to resolve any difficulties or disputes. Pupils know how harmful bullying is and recognise the different forms of bullying.

Staff are well trained and know what to do if they are concerned that a pupil may be at risk of harm. You and your staff make referrals to the local authority where appropriate and work effectively with multi-agency teams to support pupils and their families in times of need.

Inspection findings

- My first line of enquiry centred on how well teachers adapt the activities being taught in order to maximise progress for pupils. I observed the learning in classes throughout the school and saw teachers making adjustments to teaching to ensure that progress is at least good. For example, teachers were observed

monitoring the progress being made, liaising with the additional adults in the classrooms and assessing pupils' understanding. As a result of these highly effective strategies, pupils make rapid progress because teachers have a high expectation of what their pupils can and will achieve.

- In recent years, leaders have implemented a cycle of peer coaching and peer observations. This has enabled teachers and support staff to improve their teaching methods and, as a result, they have a greater awareness of how pupils learn best. Staff value this process and were able to explain how it has improved their teaching. For example, a teacher discussed how they would now move to concrete resources more quickly than previously in order to support the pupils' understanding.
- Leaders have successfully delivered training to tackle the gaps in their staff's knowledge. Leaders' monitoring of teaching and assessment indicated that questioning was becoming an area for improvement. Consequently, all staff received training on how best to question pupils. During the inspection, questioning was seen as a strength of the school. Teachers and support staff asked challenging questions in order to maximise progress for pupils.
- Throughout the school, there is an expectation that pupils will and can achieve. Expectations are high and progress is strong as a result. However, the same level of high expectation is not consistent across the school, and progress across the curriculum varies as a result. In a minority of classes, teachers do not have a high expectation of how pupils present their work. As a result, work books appear untidy.
- My second line of enquiry to establish whether the school remains good was to consider how well leaders are addressing the gender differences in writing by the end of key stage 2. The school has adopted various approaches in recent years to improve boys' writing and this is proving successful. For example, the curriculum has been revised to ensure that boys are provided with opportunities to enthuse and engage them in writing. A group of boys told me they enjoyed writing about Harry Potter and their visit to Harry Potter World.
- Leaders are currently undertaking research projects throughout the school to address the difference in writing attainment between boys and girls. Teachers and support staff are adopting different strategies to tackle the issue. However, this work has not yet had a full impact on boys' writing. While there is still a difference between boys' and girls' writing, this is significantly smaller than in previous years. Where teachers have a higher expectation of what boys can achieve, the difference in attainment is smaller.
- For my third line of enquiry, I looked at how well leaders are making sure that the recent end of key stage results continue to improve. Analysis of school assessment information and pupils' work books show that a higher percentage of current pupils are on track to reach the expected standard compared to previous years. Significantly more pupils are also on track to reach the higher-than-expected standard at the end of key stage 2. Strategies discussed in earlier key lines of enquiry are playing their part in ensuring that more pupils reach the expected and higher-than-expected standard than in previous years. Pupils who have special education needs (SEN) and/or disabilities and those who are eligible

for the pupil premium are also making good progress.

- Pupils' work books show that progress from starting points across the curriculum is at least good. In many classes, pupils are making rapid progress, and teachers and support staff are providing timely and purposeful guidance that enables pupils to improve their work.
- My final key line of enquiry centred on attendance. Over the past three years, attendance has fluctuated but has always been below the national average. School information shows that the attendance of current pupils is improving but will be below national figures in 2018. However, the percentage of pupils who are persistently absent has decreased in recent years, and the school is to be commended for its work in ensuring that fewer pupils are persistently absent from school.
- Tracking of pupils' attendance is thorough and provides leaders and governors with accurate and up-to-date analysis. Parents are encouraged to attend meetings to discuss their child's attendance when attendance drops over a two-week period, highlighting the proactive attitude of the school towards attendance. A variety of initiatives have been implemented to improve attendance. For example, pupils are invited to an 'attendance shop' to purchase prizes when their attendance is positive.

Next steps for the school

Leaders and those responsible for governance should ensure that:

- teachers have a consistently high expectation of what pupils can achieve and how pupils present their work
- the gap between boys' and girls' attainment in writing continues to narrow.

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

Yours sincerely

Joseph Figg
Ofsted Inspector

Information about the inspection

During the inspection, I spoke with you and your senior leadership team, school governors and a representative from the local authority. I spoke to a group of pupils and individual pupils around the school.

We made visits to lessons to observe pupils' learning and conducted several

learning walks around the school. We also looked at pupils' books across a range of ages and abilities as well as information from the school's assessment system.

I scrutinised a range of documentary evidence, which included the school's self-evaluation, the school development plan, current progress information and pupil attendance information. I evaluated safeguarding referrals and child protection records, including the single central record. I also looked at the school's website.

In addition, I took account of 70 responses to the Parent View online survey, 59 free-text comments from parents, 63 responses to the pupil questionnaire and 24 responses to the staff questionnaire.