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Mrs Nicky Patrick  
Spring Meadow Primary School & School House Nursery  
Pound Farm Drive  
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Essex  
CO12 4LB

Dear Mrs Patrick

### **Short inspection of Spring Meadow Primary School & School House Nursery**

Following my visit to the school on 24 April 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 January 2014.

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

The leadership team has maintained the good quality of education in the school since the last inspection. Leaders and governors have an accurate understanding of what needs to be done and provide detailed plans to secure improvements. Governors keep themselves well informed through regular visits to the school and their analysis of leaders' assessment information.

The previous inspection report identified the high quality of provision and good progress that children made in early years. The recently acquired and beautifully refurbished Nursery provision now offers excellent opportunities for leaders to further develop community links and get children off to an even earlier good start. Other strengths identified were the knowledge and commitment to improvement demonstrated by the governors, the support for pupils who have special educational needs (SEN) and/or disabilities and pupils' good behaviour. These all remain strengths. You continue to offer a broad curriculum that links subjects together and interests pupils. Teachers plan lessons that engage pupils.

Pupils are articulate, polite and well mannered. Their attitudes to learning are positive. Pupils enjoy their work. They think that their teachers make learning fun and talk about their determination to do well. They say that they enjoy homework. Pupils are motivated by the achievement assemblies and awards system. Pupils are keen to take on responsibilities and exercise democratic choices. They spoke about performing duties, as representatives on the school council, for example, and as play buddies with early years children, assistants for music, sport leaders, running

their own class assemblies and raising money for various charities. Pupils also said that they enjoy the wide range of sports, clubs, trips and special events that are on offer.

Parents and carers I spoke with appreciate the efforts the school makes to support them in helping their children to learn, through information and workshops. A number of parents of pupils who have SEN and/or disabilities commented on the excellent provision for their children and the rapid progress they are making. Many parents commented that the school is, 'at the heart of the community' and that the school, 'not only helps pupils but helps the whole family.'

### **Safeguarding is effective.**

Leaders and governors ensure that safeguarding arrangements are fit for purpose. As the safeguarding lead, you place the highest priority on keeping pupils safe and ensure vigilance at all times. You check that records are detailed and of a high quality. All staff and governors receive regular training updates and know how to alert leaders to any concerns that they have. Visitors are provided with the necessary information in the event of having any concerns. You work effectively with many external agencies to ensure that pupils are kept safe and families are very well supported. Pre-employment checks on staff and records are comprehensive to ensure that they are suitable to work with children. You take all aspects of health and safety seriously and there is good provision for pupils who have medical needs.

Almost all parents who completed Ofsted's online questionnaire, Parent View, feel that their children are safe. All pupils with whom I spoke said that they feel safe at school and that bullying is very rare. They are confident that staff would help them if they did have a problem and know how to seek advice if they need it. They have a good awareness of when they might be at risk and how to manage this effectively, including when using the internet.

### **Inspection findings**

- To ascertain whether the school remains good, my first line of enquiry was about the actions that school leaders are taking to ensure that pupils make good progress in writing between key stages 1 and 2. Pupils in the school achieve as well as pupils nationally in writing by the end of key stage 2; however, the progress they make in writing is not as strong as it is in reading and mathematics. Pupils achieve higher standards in reading and mathematics than is the case for pupils nationally. Leaders recognise this and have worked hard to put in place a number of changes, which are having a positive effect. Current pupil assessment information shows that more pupils are making good progress in writing as they move through the school.
- A new approach to teaching writing has been successfully implemented as it is embedded in Years 5 and 6 and as a result, pupils' work in these year groups is showing strong progress. This is being rolled out to Years 3 and 4 and is beginning to have a positive effect. Teachers demonstrate what a good piece of

writing looks like and how writers select their words and compose their texts, which is helping pupils to write well themselves. Teachers make use of helpful displays on walls to assist this. Pupils are being taught to apply their grammatical knowledge in their writing well. Leaders have introduced a clear set of non-negotiable expectations, which teachers refer pupils to regularly.

- Leaders have made good use of opportunities to work with partner schools, for example to develop teachers' skills and to ensure their assessments of writing are accurate. Leaders and teachers regularly analyse school assessment information in order to provide tailored help for pupils who are falling behind.
- During the inspection, I looked at pupils' writing with leaders and saw that it is progressing well as they move through the school. Pupils usually present their work well. There is not, however, a consistent approach to the correction of spelling errors.
- In subjects other than English, pupils have some opportunities to write at length, but this is not consistent in all subjects. Consequently, the benefits of reinforcing and practising skills being learned in English are not fully maximised.
- Next, I looked at whether the higher attaining pupils are challenged to make as much progress as they can. In 2016 and 2017, from early years to the end of key stage 1, these pupils did not make as rapid progress as other pupils in their reading, writing and mathematics. This was also true between key stages 1 and 2 in reading and writing. Leaders are aware of this and have taken some steps, such as working with Essex University, and careers education, to raise the aspirations of this group.
- Teachers have undergone training to enable them to better match work to the needs of different groups of pupils. However, there are still some lessons where tasks do not sufficiently challenge the most able pupils because they are sometimes working on tasks that they can easily manage. Teachers offer good support to most pupils, but the most able pupils do not always need as much help as is given. Occasionally, activities did not allow them to move on quickly enough and as result, they tended to lose interest.
- Finally, I asked whether leaders are doing all that they can to improve attendance, since overall attendance is low and too many pupils are frequently absent from school. Leaders and governors are placing a strong emphasis on improving attendance. A new attendance policy was recently launched with parents, which includes additional help with medical needs. The school has recently undertaken a publicity campaign to raise awareness of the negative effects of missing learning. Parents I spoke with talked about this. Pupils also talked about the attendance awards that the new headteacher has introduced, which they say motivates pupils to 'think twice about missing school.' A breakfast club also supports good attendance and punctuality.
- Governors have put substantial resources into addressing this problem. The school has its own attendance officer who works with outside agencies when necessary. In addition, the learning mentor supports families to overcome barriers to attending. Leaders make use of the full range of their legal powers. As a result of these efforts, attendance is beginning to improve and there are

fewer pupils with very low attendance.

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

Leaders and those responsible for governance should ensure that:

- progress in writing continues to accelerate by:
  - embedding practice through all year groups
  - planning for the systematic teaching of writing, with more opportunities for pupils to practise writing in all subjects
  - implementing a consistent school approach to the correction of spelling errors
- the most able pupils are fully challenged and that no time is wasted undertaking activities that they have already mastered.

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

Yours sincerely

Susan Sutton  
**Ofsted Inspector**

### **Information about the inspection**

During the inspection, I met with you, senior and middle leaders, parents, governors and pupils and spoke with a local authority representative. I visited classrooms and looked at pupils' work. I observed behaviour around the school. I reviewed the school's website and documents, including the single central record, child protection systems, the school's self-evaluation and external evaluations, plans for school improvement, pupil assessments and progress information. I took account of the 13 responses by parents and 29 responses from staff to Ofsted's online questionnaires, as well as 12 comments from parents by text.