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Mrs Dawne Hunt
Executive Headteacher
Holton-le-Clay Junior School
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Dear Mrs Hunt

Short inspection of Holton-le-Clay Junior School

Following my visit to the school on 1 May 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.

Based on the evidence gathered during this short inspection, I have identified some priorities for improvement which I advise the school to address. In light of these priorities, the school's next inspection will be a full section 5 inspection. **There is no change to the school's current overall effectiveness grade of good as a result of this inspection.**

You and the leadership team have worked hard to maintain a positive learning ethos within the school during a period of staffing instability. With support from the local authority, you are beginning to address some of the inconsistencies in the quality of teaching, learning and assessment in order to improve pupils' outcomes. The views of parents and carers reflect their concerns about changes to staffing and this has affected their confidence in the school.

Pupils report that they enjoy their learning. They spoke with enthusiasm about the topics that they have studied and said that teachers 'made them really interesting'. There is a calm and purposeful attitude towards learning within the school. Relationships between pupils and adults are extremely positive. Pupils told me that teachers listen to what they say and will always help them. Pupils feel happy and safe in school. They try hard and behave well. They take care with the presentation of their work and are proud of their school.

Leaders have not successfully addressed the improvement areas from the previous inspection. For example, the quality of teaching and learning is not consistently good and the most able pupils are not sufficiently challenged in all areas of the curriculum. Leaders have accurately identified the reasons for pupils'

underachievement in reading and have implemented a range of strategies to tackle these. These are beginning to show some impact on pupils' progress, but need further time to embed and develop.

The school has recently appointed new middle leaders to help drive improvement. These staff are new to their roles and consequently, their impact is not yet ensuring that all pupils make strong progress from their different starting points.

Governors have recognised these areas for improvement and are now beginning to challenge the leadership team more effectively. They are committed to the school and they know the issues well. They have managed the changes in staffing well and the chair of governors has provided strong support to the headteacher during this period of challenge. They have a clear vision for the school and know what needs to be done to further improve the quality of education. They check the work of the school regularly and build relationships with staff to ensure that they have a clear picture of the school. They know that there is more work to be done to improve standards. They have recently appointed new governors to help move the school forward and build parents' confidence.

Safeguarding is effective.

You have ensured that pupils are safe in school. Staff are well trained and knowledgeable about safeguarding procedures and new staff have a strong induction. The introduction of a new online system is sharpening the ability of staff to identify and monitor pupils who may be of concern. Staff report that their concerns are acted upon quickly by senior leaders. Safeguarding records are stored securely. You ensure that all staff and volunteers undertake rigorous checks before they start work or volunteer at the school.

Pupils report that bullying is rare and that adults act quickly to address it when it occurs. They receive visits from police officers to help them to stay safe online and are taught how to cycle safely. They have also learned about personal safety from the NSPCC. The school effectively uses the wider curriculum to promote pupils' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development. For example, pupils explored ideas about friendship and bullying through a theatre company performance and have taken part in Modern Day Slavery Awareness workshops. Pupils also spoke highly of the residential visits that they have taken part in. The school has historically high rates of attendance that are above those found nationally. There are robust procedures in place to address poor attendance. Pupils value their school and attend regularly.

Inspection findings

- Since 2017, leaders have recognised the reasons for the significant underachievement in reading, particularly for the most able and for boys. They are addressing these in a more consistent manner this year. They are using assessment procedures to monitor progress more accurately and to target support more precisely where it is needed.

- Leaders have introduced a range of strategies to encourage more regular reading at home and have held workshops for parents. They have promoted reading across the school through interesting displays and have successfully engaged pupils through the class reading challenge.
- Leaders have restructured the curriculum to link it to interesting texts, and have put in place a range of daily reading activities across the school. Pupils have responded well to these learning opportunities and they feel that these are encouraging them to read more often and to improve their reading skills. One pupil commented, 'this is a reading school now'. Pupils spoke enthusiastically about the impact of the class reading challenge in encouraging pupils to read at home more and enjoy the wide choice of reading books that the school provides.
- Teaching assistants now deliver targeted support for individual pupils in reading. They use effective questioning to help pupils to develop their vocabulary and comprehension skills. Early results from this intervention suggest that this approach is effectively helping to raise pupils' attainment in reading.
- The school's approach to reading this year is beginning to have an impact upon the percentage of pupils working at age-related expectations. However, inaccuracies in assessment from the previous academic year limit the validity of judgements about the progress being made in some year groups. You have recognised this and have now put into place additional reading assessments to evaluate progress more accurately. You are also using external moderation and peer reviews from other schools to provide additional challenge to help you to improve the school further.
- Recent staff changes have affected the school's drive for improvement, and as a result, the quality of teaching, learning and assessment is not yet consistently good. You are keen to address this and the recent appointment of a deputy headteacher is having a strong impact on school improvement. The school has also appointed new middle leaders, but their impact is not yet strong enough to drive forward the improvement that the school needs. The monitoring procedures that are now in place are more rigorous, but have had insufficient time to have a sustained impact upon pupils' progress in all subject areas.
- In pupils' writing books, there is evidence that the most able are making strong progress, but this is not consistent across all subjects. Evidence from lesson observations and from pupils' work suggests that in some subjects, work is insufficiently challenging for the most able. Pupils of all abilities are not routinely challenged to extend their learning and deepen their understanding. In some lessons, the use of skilful questioning effectively challenged pupils' thinking and promoted the use of technical vocabulary well. In other lessons and in pupils' workbooks, this level of challenge was not routinely evident.

Next steps for the school

Leaders and those responsible for governance should ensure that:

- pupils are given appropriately challenging work across all areas of the curriculum to enable them to achieve as well as they should, particularly the most able pupils
- they continue their successful work to improve reading across the school
- they strengthen leadership at all levels to ensure that the quality of teaching, learning and assessment is consistently good.

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

Yours sincerely

Heather Hawkes
Ofsted Inspector

Information about the inspection

During the inspection, I held meetings with your and the deputy headteacher, the literacy and numeracy leaders, three governors (including the chair of governors), and the local authority adviser. I visited all of the classrooms with you and the deputy headteacher and we also examined pupils' work together. I spoke with pupils informally during lessons and formally during a group discussion. I also observed pupils' behaviour around the school and in lessons.

I took into account the 30 responses to Parent View (Ofsted's online survey) and Ofsted's free-text service. I also spoke with a small number of parents at the start of the school day. I examined a range of documents, including safeguarding records and policies, information relating to pupils' attendance and behaviour, a summary of the school's self-evaluation and the school's improvement plan.