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Mr Simon Walters
Headteacher
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Dear Mr Walters

Short inspection of Holt Community Primary School

Following my visit to the school on 5 June 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 June 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 continue to lead the school with enthusiasm and a strong sense of purpose. You and your leaders work hard to create a safe and welcoming environment in which pupils develop their social and academic skills. The school's motto, 'Everybody safe, everybody happy, everybody learning', underpins your desire for every child to receive a well-rounded education. Your curriculum is well planned and vibrant. Topics provide first-hand experiences that bring learning to life for pupils. These approaches are recognised by parents and carers and succinctly expressed by one comment on Parent View, Ofsted's online questionnaire, 'Time is taken to treat everyone as individuals, to help their characters shine and ensure they are interested in what they are doing.' Other parents made similar comments.

You and your leadership team have an accurate view of the school's strengths and priorities. From this, you have identified and implemented strategies that have supported improvements in pupils' outcomes, most notably in mathematics. You make effective use of expertise within the staff, ensuring that they are well trained, to help bring about improvement. For example, teaching is now stronger because all staff have had the opportunity to attend specific courses to improve their practice.

The overwhelming majority of parents are positive about the school. They are particularly pleased about the level of pastoral care and the opportunity to meet

with staff should a problem arise. Typical comments from parents included, 'The teachers and headmaster are very approachable and it is easy to arrange time to speak with them if I have concerns or a problem.'

Pupils are positive about their learning and the lessons planned by their teachers. When I met with a group of pupils, they spoke confidently about the range of subjects they enjoy. They showed particular enthusiasm when a trip or a visitor is included as part of a topic. For example, pupils are looking forward to visiting a local town to help their understanding of how places grow over time.

At the previous inspection in 2014, inspectors asked the leadership team to raise achievement in mathematics. Leaders have addressed this by providing training for teachers in developing pupils' reasoning and thinking skills. Pupils' workbooks show effective use of a range of strategies to secure their understanding of problems and concepts. As a result, the proportion of pupils reaching and exceeding the expected standards at the end of key stage 2 was above the national average in 2017. However, the presentation of pupils' work is generally poor, leading to some mistakes in the written calculations they make. We agreed that teachers' expectations are inconsistent and standards of presentation need to be raised further.

Inspectors also asked you to improve pupils' spelling. Your leaders have introduced a specific programme to help support pupils who require additional help. Regular assessments check the progress of pupils. Trained teaching assistants provide targeted activities to address areas of weakness in pupils' spelling. Consequently, the accuracy of pupils' spelling is improving.

Governors have a good understanding of the school's strengths and areas for development. Most of the governors are new to the role and have specific responsibilities. However, the school improvement plan includes a range of priorities and is not specific about how frequently progress towards achieving them should be checked. Consequently, the challenge provided by governors is not as rigorous as it should be.

Safeguarding is effective.

School leaders have established a caring and nurturing environment for pupils. You ensure that the school's safeguarding arrangements are well maintained and fit for purpose. Records are detailed and organised appropriately. All of the required checks regarding the suitability of staff who work with children are carried out and clearly recorded. You are well supported by governors who carry out regular and comprehensive checks of safeguarding measures. Staff understand how to be vigilant for any signs of concern. Regular updates and meetings ensure that safeguarding has a high profile across the school.

Pupils said that they feel safe at school. They are confident that if they had any concerns they would make use of the 'worry box', and adults would respond quickly. Pupils understand different forms of bullying and said that this is rare at

their school. Pupils learn how to keep themselves safe online and in other areas, for example by water or near the roads. All parents who responded to the online Ofsted survey agree that their children are safe and happy in school.

Inspection findings

- As part of this inspection, I looked at how effectively leaders are ensuring that pupils make more progress in reading. This was a focus because pupils' attainment in reading was below national expectations in key stages 1 and 2 in 2017. I heard pupils from across different year groups read. Older pupils read high-quality texts with expression and fluency. Younger pupils mostly use their phonic knowledge well to break down and sound out unfamiliar words. However, this is not consistent, which means that some pupils are not able to gain meaning from the story when questioned.
- Leaders with responsibility for improving reading have raised expectations that pupils read daily at school and at home. A renewal of the library stock has ensured that high-quality texts are available and selected by pupils. Staff have received further training in the teaching of reading. However, leaders have not evaluated the impact of this training on pupils' outcomes to ensure that the teaching of reading is of consistently good quality.
- Next, I explored the actions that leaders have taken to improve rates of progress in key stage 1. This is because attainment was below national averages in 2017 in reading, writing and mathematics. You identified that starting points have been low for pupils entering key stage 1. To address this, leaders of the early years provision are now tracking children's development closely and then targeting specific interventions to support children's skills. For example, children's speech and language are boosted through small-group discussion and weekly use of a speech therapist. Inspection evidence also confirms that adults skilfully question children and promote their good development through effective organisation of the learning environment. For example, the farm shop included opportunities for children to develop their number skills by selling produce for different monetary amounts or writing labels for seeds growing outside. As a result of these improvements, children's development has improved and they are now well prepared for key stage 1.
- Your leaders make good use of the curriculum to build on pupils' skills in key stage 1. Teachers plan exciting activities that motivate and stimulate pupils' learning. Your chosen strategy of using practical equipment wherever possible helps to secure pupils' understanding and mastery of mathematical concepts. Pupils make good progress with writing because it has purpose. For example, reports about the Great Fire of London gave vivid eyewitness accounts of the destruction caused that day. However, pupils are not consistent in the presentation of their work, especially where they apply skills across the curriculum. Evidence gathered during inspection and the school's own assessments confirm that pupils are making good progress across key stage 1.
- I also checked how well disadvantaged pupils achieve across the school. This was because your information on the school's website shows that differences are diminishing by the end of key stage 2. However, it is not clear how well

disadvantaged pupils achieve across the school.

- You are clear about the actions you have taken because you have carefully analysed the barriers faced by disadvantaged pupils. Your leaders have successfully engaged with parents and provided information and resources to help them to support their children's learning at home. Your nurture provision provides a safe environment for pupils so that staff can check on their welfare and progress. Whole-school training helps adults to build better relationships with pupils because pupils are able to express how they are feeling. Your actions are ensuring that disadvantaged pupils' attitudes to learning are improving. Evidence from behaviour logs shows that there has been a reduction in the number of recorded incidents. Disadvantaged pupils are attending school more regularly, and this is helping to diminish the differences in achievement between them and other pupils. However, there remains a gap for those pupils working at higher standards. Your plans are not clear about how the additional funding is used to support the progress of the most able disadvantaged pupils.
- Finally, I looked at what actions leaders are taking to improve pupils' attendance. Published information shows that attendance was lower than the national average in 2016 and persistent absence was rising. Your attendance leader tracks and analyses the attendance of different groups of pupils, and parents are supported where pupils' attendance becomes less frequent. Strategies developed by leaders encourage pupils to attend regularly, especially to earn golden tickets for the termly draw. Attendance is now improving.

Next steps for the school

Leaders and those responsible for governance should ensure that:

- key priorities are clear so that all leaders can be rigorously held to account by the governing body for improvements in the work of the school
- the teaching of reading is consistently good so that pupils' attainment in reading is improved
- plans for the use of pupil premium funding identify actions to support the progress of the most able disadvantaged pupils
- teachers have high expectations for how pupils present their work in all subjects across the curriculum.

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

Yours sincerely

Steve Mellors
Her Majesty's Inspector

Information about the inspection

During the inspection, I held meetings with you, senior leaders, five governors and the school's improvement partner. I met with the chair of governors separately. I met a group of pupils and spoke with other pupils during the day. I heard pupils from different year groups read. I took note of 14 responses to Parent View and the 10 free-text comments. I carried out a learning walk jointly with you and visited different classes. I looked at pupils' work in their classrooms and considered the progress evident in a selection of pupils' workbooks. I scrutinised school documents, including the child protection and safeguarding records, and the school's improvement plan and self-evaluation document.