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Mrs Kathryn Fox
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Dear Mrs Fox

Short inspection of Hemingford Grey Primary School

Following my visit to the school on 12 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 November 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 are rightly proud that Hemingford Grey Primary School is a welcoming, caring school in which pupils develop the skills and the security that they need to become enquiring and confident learners. Staff and pupils have worked, together, to define the school's values of 'resourcefulness, reflectiveness, resilience, relationships, risk-taking and respect'. These are a lived reality in the school's day-to-day life and work. Pupils are unfailingly polite and cooperative in their learning and during social times. They get to work quickly, are keen to find out new things, and know how to do so. They keep trying when they encounter difficulty. Pupils enjoy thinking deeply about the 'big questions' that they are asked to consider. They listen carefully to each other's views and understand, in the words of one pupil, that 'sometimes getting it wrong first helps you to get it right later'.

Staff have successfully ensured that the outstanding behaviour and positive relationships noted at the time of the previous inspection have been maintained. All parents and carers who responded to Parent View, the Ofsted online survey, agree that the school ensures that pupils are well behaved. Parents also expressed their appreciation of the wide range of activities that pupils can engage in outside of their taught lessons. In the words of one parent, 'Teachers work tirelessly to enhance school life.' Pupils benefit from a multitude of trips and visits and many engage enthusiastically in the wide range of competitive sport fixtures. Others help to

collect eggs from the school's hens and grow vegetables in the allotment that are used by the school's catering team. Art and photography are particularly popular; the high-quality drawings, paintings and photographs displayed around the school demonstrate pupils' mastery of a range of techniques. Parents also appreciate the many workshops that provide them with guidance on how to support their children's learning, including in reading and mathematics.

You have worked with your team of leaders to find the most effective practice in other schools and to use that to inform your plans for improvement. These are well focused and based upon a secure analysis of strengths and areas for development. You have focused upon ensuring that from the time that they join the school, all pupils learn how to plan pieces of work, complete research, and use different ways to solve problems or to present their findings or ideas. By the time pupils reach key stage 2, these ways of working become second nature. They help pupils to find things out for themselves, to show resilience in the face of difficulty, and to evaluate information and ideas. Pupils also learn how to use knowledge and skills in one subject to enhance their learning in another. Teachers show pupils how to write in a manner appropriate to the task at hand, using subject-specific academic language. Although this helps to prepare them well for the next stage in their education, you acknowledge that there is more to do to ensure that pupils' spelling is as secure as it should be.

Teachers value the training that you provide because it helps them to make the changes needed to fulfil the school's improvement plans. Additional training has ensured that each of biology, chemistry and physics are taught with confidence. Pupils' science work is particularly strong. It demonstrates their ability to establish a hypothesis, carry out an experiment to test it, and write up a conclusion. Your analysis of 2017's key stage 2 test results in mathematics indicated that some pupils struggled when asked to use their knowledge to solve real-world problems. Training has enabled teachers to use a range of different techniques that are helping pupils of all ages to develop this ability well. Further evidence of the improving quality of teaching, learning and assessment can be seen in the good and improving pupil achievement in both the early years and key stage 1, and in the foundation subjects throughout the school. However, in subjects within the wider curriculum, teachers' assessment of what pupils know and can do is insufficiently precise. This limits teachers' ability to plan tasks that accelerate pupils' progress even further.

The governing body provides you with strong support and challenge. Governors acknowledge that the poor progress and low attainment of some pupils in the key stage 2 national tests in mathematics were not anticipated. Governors have worked with you to arrange external checks upon the effectiveness of teaching in mathematics and the accuracy of assessment. They are also making regular visits to the school to see the impact of the changes that you and other leaders are making. They are offering precise and robust challenge to leaders over the progress that pupils make.

Safeguarding is effective.

Leaders, including governors, have helped to establish a strong safeguarding culture. Pupils' safety is, in the words of one leader, 'everybody's business'. Staff know pupils well and are alert to any changes in attendance, appearance or behaviour that might indicate that a pupil could be vulnerable. Staff know how to report concerns and records are careful, complete and securely held. They demonstrate that pupils who need help and support receive it, and that leaders are determined to ensure that this happens in a timely and effective manner.

All parents who responded to Parent View agree that their children are safe; all staff who responded to the Ofsted survey concur with that judgement. Pupils told me that they feel safe at all times when they are at school, that bullying happens very rarely, and that teachers deal with it swiftly and effectively when it does take place. Parents share pupils' confidence in this regard. Pupils speak confidently about the strategies they use to stay safe; for example, they know it is important to be cautious about sharing information with people who they do not know when using the internet.

Governors take care to monitor the school's safeguarding processes and practices. They ensure that leaders carry out all relevant checks on adults working at the school and that the record of these is accurately maintained.

Inspection findings

- The first line of enquiry we agreed upon was to explore the progress key stage 2 pupils make in mathematics. This is because in 2017, overall, key stage 2 pupils' progress was low in the national tests and their attainment was below the national average.
- Leaders have reflected on the school's approach to how mathematics is taught and have taken action to improve it. Teachers explained that, as a result of effective training and the sharing of good practice, they are more confident when teaching pupils to apply their mathematics skills to questions involving problem-solving. Teachers are also showing pupils how to use different methods to approach such questions.
- Pupils' books demonstrate that these ways of working are now firmly embedded throughout the school, and that teachers are alert to pupils' misconceptions. These are tackled quickly, so that pupils move forward in their learning; daily practice is also effective in helping pupils to make strong progress. Teachers are moving the more able pupils forward quickly, without this limiting the depth of their mathematical understanding.
- We agreed that my second line of enquiry would be to establish how far leaders and teachers have ensured that pupils spell with accuracy. This is because in both 2016 and 2017, too few pupils achieved the expected standard by the end of key stage 2. Leaders' own evaluation indicated that too many pupils misspell familiar as well as unfamiliar words.
- Leaders and teachers are using a range of strategies to help pupils to spell words

with accuracy. These include spelling games, and encouraging pupils to research the meaning and origin of particular words so that these become memorable to them. Pupils are encouraged to read challenging as well as age-appropriate fiction and non-fiction texts. This is so that they come across less common words more regularly than they otherwise might and see how these are used and spelled. Leaders are using national standardised tests to check pupils' spelling; during the current year, the results indicate considerable improvement in the ability of pupils of all ages to spell accurately.

- However, work in pupils' books indicates that too many continue to misspell some commonly used words when they are writing outside of formal test conditions. You have made recent changes to the way you ask teachers to provide pupils with feedback about spellings in order to address this issue. It is clear from pupils' work that teachers are making these changes, but it is too soon to be able to determine their impact.
- My third line of enquiry was to explore how far leaders' and teachers' work is enabling pupils to make strong progress across subjects in the wider curriculum. This is because at the time of the last inspection, leaders were advised to improve the quality of teaching across the curriculum in order to accelerate pupils' progress further.
- You are ensuring that pupils use the knowledge they gain in one subject to support their learning in others. For example, pupils regularly use their mathematics skills to help answer 'big questions' in science or in geography. Pupils typically make considerable gains in their knowledge because they are taught how to research effectively. Teachers help them to understand the best ways to summarise information and to use it to support well-argued responses to questions that capture their interest. Much of the work that pupils in Year 3 and Year 4 complete is of particularly high quality. Art, history, physical education and science are particular strengths.
- Some older pupils have had less experience of these ways of working, and you have not yet fully evaluated the extent to which Year 5 and Year 6 pupils' responses to the 'big questions' indicate that they have made the expected gains in their learning. Sometimes, pupils complete work that deepens their knowledge and understanding but without addressing the key question. When this is the case, pupils often do not have the chance to redraft their work and make it more relevant to the original question. This limits their progress.
- Teachers have a clear understanding of the curriculum's aims and objectives insofar as each of the foundation subjects are concerned. They keep 'learning journey' records that identify which pieces of work show that a pupil has acquired knowledge or demonstrated a skill. You acknowledge that teachers' assessment in these subjects is often not precise enough to identify what a pupil needs to do next in order to deepen their knowledge or refine a skill. This limits teachers' ability to plan activities that will help pupils to take the next steps in their learning.

Next steps for the school

Leaders and those responsible for governance should ensure that:

- pupils' written work improves further because they take care to spell words correctly
- in the foundation subjects, pupils complete work that enables them to fully answer the key questions set, and that they are provided with appropriate opportunities to redraft and improve their work
- the assessment of pupils' work in the foundation subjects is precise enough to enable teachers to plan activities that will further accelerate pupils' progress.

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

Yours sincerely

Jason Howard
Her Majesty's Inspector

Information about the inspection

I held discussions with you and other leaders about the key lines of enquiry for this inspection, leaders' evaluation of the quality of education, plans for future improvement and information about current pupils' learning. I met with other leaders, teachers, and members of support staff, and four members of the governing body. Documents such as the school's improvement plan, leaders' monitoring and analysis of the progress pupils make and the school's safeguarding arrangements, records, files and documentation were examined. I observed children and pupils learning and looked at examples of pupils' work to explore the progress they are making over time. I spoke with a group of 14 pupils and also with others informally during lessons regarding their learning. I considered the views of 40 parents who responded to Parent View and of the 26 parents who left comments on the Parent View free-text service. I also took account of the views of parents who responded to the school's own survey. The views of 26 staff who completed Ofsted's staff questionnaire were also taken into account.