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Mrs Jennifer Chiverton
Headteacher
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Dear Mrs Chiverton

Short inspection of North Borough Junior School

Following my visit to the school on 17 July 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. On joining the school in September 2017, you quickly established a strong and convincing vision to promptly stabilise the school after the many changes to staffing and leadership that took place last year. You are ably supported by the new deputy headteacher. Together, you make sure that pupils are taught well, and their well-being is looked after closely. Parents, carers and staff are highly supportive of your leadership and the improvements being made. Typical comments from parents and staff included, 'Mrs Chiverton has been the catalyst for so much positive change' and 'North Borough is once again the exciting, diverse, vibrant place to work that it should be.'

Your evaluation of the school's effectiveness is accurate. Like you, governors are committed to further improvement and they demonstrate an insightful understanding of the strengths and weaknesses of the school. The newly reformed governing body supports you effectively and increasingly offers appropriate and rigorous challenge. Governors now understand the need to check for themselves the accuracy of the information you provide about the school's development and they do so with encouraging diligence. The local authority has been instrumental in providing well-targeted support to the school over the past year and this is continuing at the appropriate level.

You have improved pupils' attitudes to their learning and behaviour, which has resulted in positive changes to the ethos of the school. Pupils enjoy learning in a calm and well-structured environment where routines are securely established.

Pupils move about the school in an orderly manner, showing politeness by holding open doors for visitors and each other. Incidents of poor behaviour have significantly reduced. Kindness and consideration are highly valued by all. Pupils relish the many opportunities they are given to contribute responsibly to the life of the school. For example, pupils aspire to be language ambassadors, eco-councillors and library monitors. Pupils are eager to come to school, and this is reflected in the overall high and improving attendance figures.

The many and different cultures and languages of pupils at the school are widely celebrated in lessons, assemblies and events such as the school's annual and highly valued 'language fair'. You and your staff make sure pupils have a deep understanding of diversity and equality, bringing a further dimension to pupils' experiences at the school. All pupils spoken to said that the school is a harmonious place, citing 'Everyone gets along, and no-one is treated differently.' Older pupils powerfully explained that 'We all have the same energy' and 'Love has no labels.'

The vast majority of parents who responded to Ofsted's online questionnaire, Parent View, and parents spoken to during the inspection, were positive about their children's progress and school experience. Parents say that leaders and staff listen carefully to any concerns they have, without being judged. Levels of trust between the school and parents have risen sharply, illustrated by this comment from a parent, 'When Mrs Chiverton says she's going to do something, it happens.'

At the time of the last inspection, you were asked to make sure that pupils were challenged as well in writing as they were in reading and mathematics. You were also asked to give subject leaders confidence to carry out checks on teaching and pupils' achievement in the subject areas for which they were responsible. Work in pupils' books and on displays around the school showed that they write regularly at length and enjoy writing for many different purposes. Teachers pay attention to pupils' spelling and make exciting links across the curriculum where pupils' writing can be further developed. Changes in staffing have meant that you are developing a new leadership team. These new leaders demonstrate the experience and enthusiasm to carry out their responsibilities effectively; however, it is too early to see the impact of their work.

Safeguarding is effective.

The leadership team ensures that all safeguarding arrangements are fit for purpose. You sensibly commissioned a safeguarding review last year and have made sure that recommendations have been followed up assiduously. You are not complacent and constantly seek to tighten up safeguarding systems and procedures wherever possible. Governors are becoming more thorough in checking the work of leaders and they increasingly visit the school to assure themselves that safeguarding records are up to date.

You make sure that all staff receive appropriate training, including their duty to prevent extremism and radicalisation. Staff know pupils very well, so they are alert to any concerns, which they follow up conscientiously.

You are tenacious in ensuring that the right support is made available to vulnerable pupils and their families. You use funding wisely, providing highly personalised support for pupils where it might not otherwise be obtainable. The 'nurture pod' provides an inviting and calm space for pupils who may be vulnerable where they can talk and share their worries. This all contributes to a caring and safe school community in which pupils can thrive.

All pupils spoken to and those who responded to the online survey said they feel safe at school and know what to do in the event of a fire or a major incident. Pupils can confidently describe how to keep themselves safe online because e-safety is an integral part of the school's curriculum.

Inspection findings

- During this inspection, we looked closely at specific aspects of the school's provision, including: the effectiveness of the teaching of writing; provision for the most able pupils; and how areas of the curriculum other than English and mathematics develop pupils' knowledge, skills and understanding.
- Since your arrival, you have sensibly ensured that the teaching of writing has been a top priority across the school. Work seen in pupils' books and the school's own performance information show evidence of current pupils in all year groups making good or better progress from their starting points.
- Pupils in Year 6, including disadvantaged pupils and pupils who have special educational needs (SEN) and/or disabilities have this year made strong progress in writing. This is attributable to the highly effective support and intervention they have received. This year's unvalidated performance information indicates that the proportion of pupils achieving age-related expectations in writing has remained broadly the same as last year.
- Pupils apply their writing skills confidently in a wide range of tasks across the curriculum. For example, pupils wrote a play script linked to their history work on the Tudors. Most teachers have high expectations for presentation and handwriting; however, you recognise this is not as consistent as it could be in all classes.
- You are aware that last year some of the most able pupils were not challenged to achieve highly enough, particularly in reading and writing. The new approach to guided reading is having a very positive impact on pupils' enjoyment of reading, their comprehension skills and the craft of writing. Pupils' reading books are matched well to their abilities with the most able pupils reading books that challenge them. Helpfully, you provide a wide range of reading material. Pupils value the school's well-stocked and popular 'library pod'. There are many examples in pupils' books where teachers have extended and deepened the thinking of the most able pupils. For example, in mathematics pupils are regularly encouraged to explain their reasoning. Work in books shows they can apply a broad range of punctuation and vocabulary in their writing.
- The curriculum provides many interesting opportunities to enliven learning. These

include studying interesting topics and making links to high-quality texts. For example, older pupils dissected a real heart relating to their class text about a boy who has heart disease. Pupils go on valuable trips, take part in many sporting competitions and study different religions.

- The school draws skilfully on the many different cultures that form part of its community. As one parent astutely commented, 'There is so much opportunity for learning in such a culturally rich environment.' However, you recognise that there is more work to do to further develop pupils' skills, knowledge and understanding in some areas of the curriculum and ensure that there is consistency across all year groups. Work to improve this is already planned for next year.

Next steps for the school

Leaders and those responsible for governance should ensure that:

- they develop middle and subject leaders' effectiveness to build on the developments in teaching and 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 Kent. This letter will be published on the Ofsted website.

Yours sincerely

Frances Nation

Her Majesty's Inspector

Information about the inspection

I met with you and senior leaders, and spoke to governors. I held a meeting with a representative from the local authority. Together with the deputy headteacher, we visited classes in all year groups. I considered the 42 responses to Ofsted's online questionnaire, Parent View, including 38 free-text comments and one letter from a parent. I also spoke directly to some parents. I considered 34 responses to Ofsted's staff questionnaire and one letter from a member of staff, together with 77 responses to Ofsted's online survey for pupils. I also met with a small group of pupils, talked informally to pupils about their learning and scrutinised work in pupils' books. I analysed a range of the school's documentation, including information about safeguarding and your evaluation of the school's effectiveness.