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Mrs Jacinta Foo
Headteacher
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Dear Mrs Foo

Short inspection of Little Harrowden Community Primary School

Following my visit to the school on 12 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 January 2015.

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.**

This is a time of change for the school, as you move towards becoming an academy and formally joining a multi-academy trust. You have experienced a lot of staff changes and this can be unsettling in a small school community. However, you alongside the governing body have successfully recruited for the next academic year. The pupils I spoke to told me they are excited to meet the new staff and opportunities have been arranged for the new teaching staff to visit the school, including sports day and transition days. While you have told me that you have communicated these changes in a timely and well-planned way, some parents and carers remain concerned about the management of the changes and the impact these will have on pupils.

You organise regular meetings for teaching staff to work with other schools, to compare notes and reach agreement on judgements of pupils' achievement. This helps to ensure that information about pupils' achievement is accurate. You also visited other schools to see good examples of mathematics teaching and have used what you have learned to help shape your school improvement plans.

Governance is effective. Governors have a comprehensive picture of the school's strengths and the areas that need further development. The governing body ensures that secure monitoring procedures are in place. Members of the governing body are kept informed about the progress of pupils and are clear on where this is not as good as it should be. The

governors work hard to address issues raised by parents and make themselves available to discuss their concerns. They take staff well-being seriously and the governors have held drop in sessions to hear staff views.

At the time of the last inspection, you were asked to ensure that the work given to pupils is always suitably demanding. You were also asked to ensure that adults monitor pupils' progress more systematically during lessons, so that any misconceptions are identified more quickly and pupils are helped to make better progress. Observations during this inspection showed that teachers adapt their plans throughout the lesson to meet the needs of individual learners. This helps to ensure that everyone is making progress. We saw one teacher addressing misconceptions in a mathematics lesson by helpfully modelling vertices of a cuboid in a 3-D drawing for a small group of pupils. However, we also saw an example of where a teacher had not anticipated the concepts that could cause problems for some pupils and so did not deal with them as effectively as she could.

You were asked to make sure that improvements made in the teaching of handwriting were consolidated, particularly with regard to the consistent use of joined handwriting to improve pupils' fluency and spelling. Handwriting is now routinely taught well across the whole school and pupils' work in their books is generally presented neatly.

You have fully implemented a new system to track pupils' attainment and progress that meets the requirements of the national curriculum. It provides teachers with clear information to plan work that is at the right level of difficulty for all pupils. You and the teaching staff have a clear overview of the progress of most groups. However, the quality of planning and intervention for underperforming groups is not consistent and, as a result, progress for these groups is limited.

Safeguarding is effective.

All staff are vigilant about pupils' welfare. Staff and governors receive regular training and know the signs to look out for when checking pupils' welfare. They know the correct procedures to follow should they have any concerns about a pupil's well-being.

Safeguarding records are detailed and stored securely. The chair of the governing body makes checks to make sure they remain robust. Pupils know how to keep themselves safe in a range of situations, and the school website signposts children and parents to useful websites to help them stay safe online. Pupils feel that behaviour is good in school most of the time and they told me they feel safe at school. Some incidents of more challenging behaviour are managed well by senior staff and dedicated support staff. Risk assessments are regularly reviewed to ensure that the best strategies are used to keep pupils safe.

Inspection findings

- The school's self-evaluation document shows that improving pupils' attainment and progress in reading and mathematics have rightly been, and remain, top priorities. These were two of my key lines of enquiry for this inspection.
- You have looked to create sustained improvements in the teaching of reading across the school. For example, you have increased the time pupils spend developing their reading

comprehension skills. Your actions have led to better progress in reading across key stage 2. In 2018, unvalidated data shows that a higher proportion of pupils attained the expected standard.

- Writing attainment has also improved. However, it is clear that poor spelling and minimal opportunities to write at length are limiting the progress of some pupils, especially those who are capable of reaching high standards.
- Mathematics attainment and progress remain below the national averages. More opportunities are beginning to be provided for pupils to apply their understanding to solve mathematical problems in lessons. However, these are yet to show impact on standards across the school. Pupils' workbooks in mathematics are starting to show that teachers are planning more challenging work. On some occasions, learning is taken beyond basics of arithmetic, allowing for pupils to apply the skills they have learned in mathematics. This was less evident in some year groups, and not all teachers regularly build reasoning opportunities into lessons.
- Leaders have taken decisive actions to improve the teaching of phonics. The deputy headteacher has introduced a programme of support for less-experienced teachers, including lesson observations and modelling teaching strategies. This is having a positive impact. The proportion of pupils reaching the expected standard in the Year 1 phonics screening check improved in 2018.
- A final focus of this inspection was to review how leaders manage behaviour. I saw that leaders have high expectations and work hard to support those at risk of exclusions. Strategies such as reduced timetables, involvement of external agencies and individual support are in place. This is effective in ensuring that the most-vulnerable pupils achieve well. Behaviour seen during the inspection in lessons and around the school was consistently positive. Pupils conducted themselves well in and around the school. Together with senior leaders, you have developed a new behaviour policy based on research of effective practice. There is support available for all staff when dealing with challenging behaviour, alongside training opportunities. However, not all of the staff understand the reasoning behind decisions concerning pupils' behaviour.
- I spoke to several parents on the playground at the start of the school day and I read over 70 responses on Parent View. While many parents spoke positively about behaviour in the school, some parents expressed concern over the management of challenging behaviour. You have not yet successfully reassured a large proportion of parents that behaviour in and around the school is safely or effectively managed.

Next steps for the school

Leaders and those responsible for governance should ensure that:

- new developments in mathematics, particularly opportunities for reasoning, are monitored closely to ensure that mathematics attainment and progress improve across the school
- teachers plan more opportunities for pupils to develop their extended writing skills
- the teaching of spelling is more effective

- the quality of planning and intervention for underperforming groups is consistent across all classes
- communication to parents about the ethos, policies and practices in the school is timely and regular.

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

Yours sincerely

Rebecca Ellers
Ofsted Inspector

Information about the inspection

During this short inspection, I met with you and the deputy head, four members of the governing body and the school bursar. I had a telephone conversation with a representative from the local authority. I spoke with pupils on the playground and in lessons. You and I visited every class together to observe learning taking place. I also spoke with a group of pupils and with several parents as they brought their children to school. I considered the views of parents through their responses to the Ofsted online survey Parent View and the views of some parents who wrote to me and asked to see me on the day of the inspection. I took into consideration the views of all your staff from the Ofsted staff survey and those that spoke to me individually.

Together with your subject leaders we examined a range of pupils' work books. I scrutinised school documentation, including that related to the safeguarding of pupils, the school behaviour policy, risk assessments and behaviour logs. I also looked at the school's improvement plan, self-evaluation, data and tracking.