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Mrs Jane Booth
Federation Headteacher
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Dear Mrs Booth

Short inspection of Cledford Primary School

Following my visit to the school on 27 November 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.

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.**

Since the previous inspection, you have led the school through significant changes in leadership and governance. The transition to a hard federation with another school has been facilitated by leaders and governors working together across both schools.

The school's values of 'resilience, respect and responsibility' are evident across the school. At playtime, pupils show respect for one another. Pupils from different year groups mix well and play happily together. Older pupils take responsibility for the play equipment, making sure it is used safely and put away tidily at the end of play. Resilience was certainly demonstrated on a cold, wet and windy afternoon when some pupils took part in an outdoor learning experience. Although their outdoor clothes and boots were wet and muddy when they came back in to school, they enthusiastically chatted about their learning.

Pupils enjoy coming to school. Behaviour in class and around the school is good. Pupils listen attentively to their teachers and start the activities planned for them quickly, keen to get on with their learning. Relationships in class are good and pupils discuss and share their ideas enthusiastically with partners. Pupils particularly enjoy art, and design and technology. This was evident in the display in the school hall of pupils' First World War history project.

Most parents and carers are supportive of the school. They recognise the

improvements that have taken place in teaching and say that 'teaching and learning are now excellent'. Parents are extremely pleased with the 'holistic approach the school takes towards children's wellbeing as well as academic progress'. They like the range of clubs and other after-school activities available.

A very small group of pupils said that they were disappointed that a few pupils try to bully others. They gave examples of 'name-calling' and explained how hurtful this can be. Some pupils are not completely convinced that this would stop if they mentioned it to an adult. A very small number of parents expressed worries about bullying. You are aware of these concerns and intend to investigate them further.

Teachers and leaders that I met during the day hold you in high regard. They say that they feel challenged by senior leaders but, at the same time, valued and supported to help them to do their jobs better. Staff morale is high. Teachers typically commented, 'Leaders and managers always take staff well-being into account and ensure that workload is appropriate.'

Teachers appreciate the many training opportunities they have; for example, working with different staff teams across the two schools in the federation. This is especially helpful for several newly appointed subject leaders. These leaders have seized the opportunity to share resources and ideas with more experienced colleagues. You make sure that teachers' assessments are more accurate through joint moderation of pupils' work across the federation.

Since the previous inspection, you have put in place some actions to raise standards in writing. Successful practice in teaching writing is modelled and shared across the federation. As a result, pupils apply their good-quality writing skills from English lessons across all subjects. However, it is too early to evaluate the impact of recent initiatives on improving standards in writing over time, especially for the most able pupils.

As part my preparation for this inspection, I noted that progress and outcomes in mathematics in 2018 were not as strong as they could be. In 2018, the proportion of Year 6 pupils reaching the expected standard fell sharply. Moreover, these pupils made less progress than the national average. Furthermore, in key stage 1, although standards are improving, the proportion of Year 2 pupils working at greater depth has been below the national average over time.

Too many pupils are persistently absent from school. You take a firm stance on authorising requests for absence and will only do this in exceptional circumstances. However, some parents continue to take their children on holidays during term time. Pupils know the rewards they can earn for good attendance such as a non-uniform day. Pupils know that 'lost minutes = lost learning'. Nevertheless, pupils' attendance continues to be below the national average, and the proportion of pupils who are persistently absent, although reducing, is still above the national average.

Leaders and governors are not able monitor with accuracy the progress that the school is making towards achieving its goals. This is because the school's action plan

lacks precision. Some actions are vague, targets lack aspiration and these are not quantifiable or measurable. Moreover, lines of accountability are unclear as the plan does not state who is responsible for delivering a key action, how this action will be monitored or by when.

Safeguarding is effective.

The leadership team has ensured that all safeguarding arrangements are fit for purpose. Staff take seriously their responsibility to keep all pupils safe. Safeguarding training is up to date and staff, including governors, confirm they have read Part 1 of 'Keeping children safe in education'. Leaders and teachers that I met during the visit were aware of the different signs and symptoms of abuse and understood their responsibility to report concerns to the designated safeguarding leaders in school.

Families of vulnerable pupils are well supported by the school's family support worker. She visits families at home and ensures that timely referrals are made to external agencies so that families and children can receive the support they need. Leaders understand the link between attendance and safeguarding. Systems to check on the safety of absent pupils are robust. The single central record is compliant, and visitors' credentials are closely checked before entry to the school.

Inspection findings

- You and your senior team have an accurate knowledge of the strengths of teaching and areas to improve. You have introduced a three-weekly cycle to monitor the quality of teaching, learning and assessment. You have made sure that this considers a wide range of evidence. Leaders observe teaching, check on the quality of pupils' work in books and review teachers' assessment information. Using this information, leaders coach teachers to help them to improve and revisit classes to check on the impact of this training.
- During my visit, I met with subject leaders to talk about the quality of provision in subjects other than English and mathematics. Many of your subject leaders are very new in post. These leaders have not had a chance to evaluate the quality of provision for their subject. Moreover, some subject leaders are non-specialists in their subject. Consequently, these leaders do not know enough about the quality of the curriculum, strengths of teaching nor if pupils are acquiring key knowledge and skills in their subject. This matched my findings from speaking with some pupils from Years 4 to 6 who could not recall anything they had learned in geography.
- Outcomes in writing are improving at key stages 1 and 2. Teachers choose texts as prompts to improve the quality of pupils' writing across all subjects. Leaders have interwoven other subjects through the themes from these texts to engage pupils and to meet their interests. Pupils are writing longer sentences using connectives now and using a greater range of vocabulary in description. You have placed greater emphasis on improving pupils' skills in grammar, punctuation and spelling. However, too few most able pupils are working at a greater depth in writing by the end of each key stage. Moreover, standards in writing continue to be lower than those in reading, as they were at the last inspection. In particular,

the gap is widest between standards in reading and writing, for the most able pupils and those who are disadvantaged.

- From pupils' work in their mathematics books it can be seen how teachers plan a variety of questions to develop pupils' fluency and understanding. During my visit, a group of the most able pupils in Year 6 were completely immersed in a problem-solving activity. However, not all pupils in all year groups have evidence in their books of solving problems. Moreover, for some pupils, the work planned by teachers is not consistently challenging. Some pupils in Year 5 said that they found the work too easy. There was very little in their books that they had got wrong or where they had been asked to think deeper about their work. Furthermore, some teachers do not do enough to support the development of pupils' reasoning skills.
- Governors are a committed and enthusiastic group. They come from a range of different backgrounds with the necessary skills to support and challenge the federation headteacher. Challenge is evident in the notes from meetings and governors undertake regular training to help them to hold leaders to full account. Some governors are very new in post so are still developing their understanding of the role.

Next steps for the school

Leaders and those responsible for governance should ensure that:

- recent initiatives to improve mathematics and writing are sustained over time so that pupils from all groups, including those that are disadvantaged and the most able, achieve well
- they improve attendance and reduce the number of pupils who are persistently absent from school
- they develop the role of subject leaders in the wider curriculum so that these middle leaders have an even greater impact on improving teaching, learning and assessment in their subject area
- the school's action plan is reviewed so that targets are measurable and there are clear lines of accountability with regular monitoring arrangements shown.

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

Yours sincerely

Denah Jones
Ofsted Inspector

Information about the inspection

During the inspection, I met with you, staff, pupils and your school improvement partner. My meeting with a group of governors included the chair of governors in a telephone conversation, in addition to those present in school. Together we toured the school at the start of the day, and you joined me in visits to classrooms to look at the wider curriculum. Accompanied by one of your senior leaders, I visited classrooms to look at teaching and learning in mathematics which included checks on pupils' work in books. I also looked at pupils' writing in English and across the curriculum together with two of your English leaders. A range of documentation was considered including the school's self-evaluation document and the school's action plan. I took account of the 22 responses to Parent View, 24 responses to the staff survey and 38 responses to the pupil survey. The single central record was checked along with other safeguarding documentation.