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12 March 2019

Mr James Clark  
Headteacher  
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Dear Mr Clark

### **Short inspection of Exning Primary School**

Following my visit to the school on 26 February 2019, 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 December 2015.

#### **This school continues to be good.**

The leadership team has maintained the good quality of education in the school since the previous inspection. Based on the evidence gathered during this short inspection, I am of the opinion that the school has demonstrated strong practice and marked improvement in specific areas. This may indicate that the school has improved significantly overall. Therefore, I am recommending that the school's next inspection be a section 5 inspection.

You and your staff have created a welcoming school, quite rightly described by governors as 'a bright and lively place to learn'. Pupils told me they have 'the best teachers', who provide support and encourage them to do well. It is clear that they enjoy coming to school. They commented that you are 'kind and fair'. The school vision statement: 'Persevere. Shine. Be happy. Value ourselves and others. Be proud of our achievements. Never, never, give up' is reflected throughout the daily work of the school and pupils' positive attitudes to learning. All staff are completely committed to the school and agree that leaders provide opportunities for them to engage in appropriate professional development, so that they can be challenged and improve. This results in high-quality teaching and learning across a wide range of subjects.

Behaviour around the school and in lessons is exemplary. Pupils are courteous and articulate. They are careful about each other's feelings and accept that everyone is 'different'. They said how they learn about a number of cultures and religions and find this interesting. Pupils have no concerns about bullying and were clear that,

should any issues arise, staff would resolve matters quickly.

Pupils attend well. They are proud of their work and eager to share the excellent pieces they have completed. Those who come to the 'wraparound care' sessions before and after school said they are very well cared for and look forward to the extra time at school, 'where we have fun'.

Parents I spoke to during the inspection and those who responded to Ofsted's online questionnaire, Parent View, were overwhelmingly positive about the school and your leadership. Almost all would recommend the school to other parents. They also valued the contribution the school makes to the local community and the friendly, supportive approach to parents. One parent commented, 'I could not ask for a better school.' Another said, 'A very good education is provided here.'

Governors are deeply committed to the school and to ensuring they provide an appropriate level of challenge and support to you and your team. Governors regularly visit the school to meet with staff and pupils. You provide governors with accurate information about the school so they have a comprehensive knowledge of the school's strengths and areas for development.

### **Safeguarding is effective.**

There is a strong culture of safeguarding. You and your staff know the pupils and their individual needs well. Staff follow up pupils' absence diligently. Staff receive regular training regarding all aspects of safeguarding and are alert to potential signs and symptoms of harm. They know how to report any concerns using the school's well-established protocols and do so promptly.

Pupils learn to keep safe and identify risks, including when using social media and in relation to road safety. Consequently, pupils can talk confidently about these issues. They say they always feel safe in school. Parents and staff agree that pupils are safe.

Governors carry out their responsibilities regarding safeguarding with considerable care. They check regularly that you and your staff are taking all necessary actions to keep pupils safe. Leaders and governors carry out rigorously the checks required to ensure that adults are suitable to work in school.

### **Inspection findings**

- At our first meeting we agreed a number of key lines of enquiry to ascertain whether the school remained at least good.
- My first line of enquiry was to look at whether the very strong progress in reading and mathematics at the end of key stage 2 in 2018 is being maintained for current pupils. The evidence I gathered confirmed that progress in mathematics and reading remains very strong.
- Together, we reviewed a number of mathematics lessons and saw that, across

the school, pupils have a strong and fluid grasp of key mathematical concepts. When asked, pupils could quickly and accurately recall previous topics they had completed in their books. For example, Year 4 pupils could talk about solving complex subtractions using fractions. Teachers plan sequences of lessons that help pupils to learn and use mathematical knowledge confidently. Pupils at the end of key stage 2 were seen working intently on pie charts and almost all could do so with complete confidence because their knowledge of percentages and fractions is very secure. Teachers are skilful and have high expectations of what pupils can achieve. Pupils respond well to this challenge and often ask for the more difficult, 'hot', task which they approach with resilience.

- Pupils in Year 6 confidently demonstrated the ability to read challenging texts fluently and could accurately summarise the key ideas. A most-able reader linked a story involving a prime minister to the context of the real world and our own Prime Minister. Together, we saw a Year 5 English lesson focused on comprehension skills. Here pupils were reading a class text with great enthusiasm. Guided by thoughtful teacher questioning, they discussed feelings and characterisations with considerable maturity, demonstrating strong skills in comprehension of the text. For example, they could infer that the boy in the story had got older 'because he now had a full set of teeth'. Writing in books confirmed the excellent progress they are making. Pupils are making strong and sustained progress in reading. The well-stocked and very inviting library shows the importance of reading at the school.
- Historically, pupils' progress in writing has not been as strong as in reading and mathematics. An area for improvement from the previous inspection report identified that English spelling, punctuation and grammar for the most able needed to improve. We agreed to look at these two aspects of pupils' work. You have identified spelling as an area for improvement in your school development plan. You and your senior leaders swiftly put actions in place, for example the regular 'Thursday spelling test', which pupils told me helped them to improve their written work.
- We looked at writing across all key stages, including in the early years. A Year 1 lesson showed pupils writing a full and accurate set of instructions on 'how to make a jam sandwich'. Pupils' handwriting is given a great deal of attention and all write fluidly with joined-up script. Writing by the most able writers in Year 2 showed strong use of punctuation and correct spelling, using words from beyond the expected age range. The storytelling was cohesive, imaginative and held the attention of the reader.
- Across all key stages, teachers support pupils to make very strong progress in developing their writing skills, by, for example, suggesting richer vocabulary and challenging imperfections in their use of spelling and grammar. Work in key stage 2 showed that pupils are assured writers who understand how to write precisely and to great effect. Current pupils are making strong progress in writing.
- My final line of enquiry was whether the curriculum meets the needs of all pupils, so they can make strong progress and are well prepared for the next stage of their education. Teachers encourage all pupils to 'take their own challenges' through a series of tasks, allowing them to secure important knowledge to make

rapid progress. The focus on high-quality teaching for all ensures that any barriers to progress are overcome by all pupils, including disadvantaged pupils. Pupils with special educational needs and/or disabilities are particularly well supported in the classroom and through targeted interventions, such as supported reading. Internal assessment information and work in books indicate that no groups of pupils are being left behind.

- You and your leaders have judiciously constructed a curriculum that challenges pupils across all subjects. Science books in key stage 2 indicate careful sequencing of topics so pupils show clear progress in their understanding of key concepts such as 'how to test for viscosity of liquids'. In English writing, subject leaders ensure that pupils are equipped for the more-challenging texts and poetry they will meet in secondary school.
- Pupils' writing in subjects other than English, although still of a high standard, does not always show the exceptional precision that pupils are capable of. Pupils commented that they sometimes rush this writing and could 'make it even better'.
- A wide range of experiences are also offered beyond the classroom. Pupils have enjoyed many outings, including to Norwich Castle, London and the Scott Polar Museum and Botanical Gardens in Cambridge, to broaden their experiences of people and places. Sport is an important part of school life and pupils take part in competitions which involve basketball, football, netball, tag rugby and gymnastics. Governors pointed out that where possible two teams are entered so that more pupils can take part.

### **Next steps for the school**

Leaders and those responsible for governance should ensure that:

- teachers expect pupils to write with the same care and precision in foundation subjects as they do in English, so that they excel in all subjects.

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

Yours sincerely

Kay Leach  
**Ofsted Inspector**

### **Information about the inspection**

During the inspection I spoke with you, the two deputy headteachers and the subject leaders for mathematics. I met three members of the governing body, including the chair. I held a telephone conversation with a representative of the

local authority and spoke informally to parents at the start of the day. I also spoke both formally and informally to pupils and observed them during break and lunchtime. You and your deputy headteachers joined me to observe learning and scrutinise pupils' work in all key stages/classes.

I scrutinised safeguarding policies and practice, including records of checks carried out before employing adults to work with children. I also examined a range of documentation, including the school's development plan.

The views of 63 parents who responded to Ofsted's online questionnaire, Parent View, were taken into account as well as free-text responses. I also took account of 10 responses to the pupil survey and 21 staff questionnaires.