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Mr David Hopkins
Head of School
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Dear Mr Hopkins

Short inspection of Bacton Primary School

Following my visit to the school on 3 July 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 your school was judged to be good in May 2015.

This school continues to be good.

The leadership team has maintained the good quality of education in the school since the previous inspection.

Bacton school is welcoming and inclusive; your pupils feel valued and are rightly proud of their school. You and your senior leaders have ensured that the learning environment is vibrant and celebratory. Your team has given considerable thought to how your curriculum can be both rich and broad. As a result, your pupils experience many engaging activities that deepen their understanding of the world around them. Parents and carers appreciate the level of care and support that you provide for your pupils. Several warmly praise your school's sense of family and the warm welcome they receive. The overwhelming majority would recommend your school to another parent.

Your governing body is well informed and works hard across the federation of schools to ensure that the quality of education continues to improve. Governors have a range of relevant skills and experiences and a good knowledge of your school. They fulfil their roles effectively. Governors recognise the strengths in being part of a wider federation and understand how, in collaborating with your partner schools, you have strengthened and enriched your provision. The governing body holds you and your team to account through performance management and planned monitoring meetings. They always check on the progress and implementation of new strategies. For example, they were very involved with the recent times tables project and worked with your leadership team to evaluate the

initiative's success.

In response to the lack of early years provision in your community, you recently opened the Starfish pre-school group on your site. The project is in its infancy but you, your governors and federation partners are fully invested and see this provision becoming wholly integrated into the life of your school. During the inspection I saw that the facility was well resourced, and the children were fully immersed in their learning. Strong relationships had been formed between the children and their play leaders.

Pupils enjoy coming to school and attendance is considerably better than the national average. You have secure systems in place for supporting good attendance; these are effective. The rate of absenteeism for all pupils is low and the rate of persistent absenteeism is very low.

Your pupils' behaviour is delightful. They are polite and friendly towards each other and the adults who work with them. They listen carefully in their lessons and try hard to do their best. One parent's comment, 'the children always behave beautifully; all ages work well together and show genuine care and support for each other', was not untypical. Those pupils who I spoke to were confident and articulate. They were able to talk positively about their time in school and the activities they enjoy most. Your kind, caring and happy pupils are a credit to the school and community.

Safeguarding is effective.

You and your team have made sure that all the school's staff understand their responsibilities regarding safeguarding. The school's arrangements for safeguarding are fit for purpose. You make sure that all necessary training is fully up to date and that staff are fully aware of the importance of this issue. As a result, they are vigilant and proactive. Your team works well with other agencies to ensure that pupils are kept safe and you use your links in the federation to ensure a consistency of practice. Governors regularly check safeguarding procedures. Recruitment processes are secure, and all statutory requirements are met.

Your pupils feel safe in school, the premises are maintained as a secure environment and pupils are always appropriately supervised. They are aware of rules that are designed to keep them safe such as visitors should always wear a lanyard or that they should never open doors to adults. Pupils have a good understanding of issues such as online safety and the importance of mutual respect. When asked, pupils said that bullying was very rare but that they know how they would react to incidents or problems should they arise.

Inspection findings

- I explored a number of lines of enquiry in this inspection. The first of these was to do with the teaching of phonics and how pupils' early reading skills were developing. Published school data indicated a marked drop in pupils' phonics

performance in 2018, I wanted to check the impact that this may have had on pupils' reading development. This year, all your Year 1 pupils have reached the required standard for phonics. However, reading attainment by the end of Year 2 and the proportion of pupils reaching the expected level in early years are below national levels.

- Pupils read regularly in school and progress through a banded reading scheme. I listened to pupils read in key stage 1. They were all confident and eager to read. They used their phonics knowledge to decode unfamiliar words, could recall information and were starting to develop inferential skills. Some reading lacked accuracy and needs good reading habits to be more firmly embedded.
- The class teacher carefully assesses pupils' progress in phonics and shares this information with supporting adults. This is used as a basis for grouping and targeted teaching. These groupings and interventions are not always effective and pupils do not make the necessary progress to attain well.
- I reviewed the school's progress against the areas for improvement identified at the previous inspection. I wanted to know that the mathematics curriculum was sufficiently challenging for all and that pupils were having every opportunity to apply their writing skills. The 'challenge curriculum' for mathematics has been consistently adopted throughout the school. Pupils are carefully guided by their teachers to choose the level of difficulty in their work. Higher-level challenges present the most able pupils with multi-step problems and good opportunities to sharpen their reasoning skills. Pupils develop strong calculation skills. The challenge approach encourages pupils to push themselves and builds resilience in their learning.
- The curriculum is carefully planned to ensure that pupils have every opportunity to write in a range of genres across the curriculum. During the inspection I saw many examples of good-quality writing in pupils' workbooks and on display. Progress for pupils in Year 6 was evident; they were writing descriptive texts using adventurous vocabulary and a range of sentence structures. Their use of punctuation was appropriate, with accurate use of speech marks and demarcating commas. Spelling was accurate and handwriting well formed.
- I also explored how well the school secured good outcomes for pupils with special educational needs and /or disabilities (SEND) and for those who are disadvantaged. Detailed and thorough records are kept on the progress of all your vulnerable pupils. This means that you and your staff have a good understanding of their needs and any barriers to their learning. You are using additional funding well to provide intervention for those pupils who need a boost or support to catch up with their learning. Pupils with SEND make good progress from their starting points. You have also given careful consideration and have allocated funding to support to pupils' emotional and social needs. This work has resulted in pupils' increased self-confidence and improved attainment.
- Finally, I wanted to check on the school's wider curriculum to see if it was rich and varied and planned in such a way that pupils would be able to develop and apply their skills and knowledge. Your school has a lively curriculum with a wide range of learning experiences which your pupils fully engage in. This was exemplified in the Year 3/4 class where pupils were building model ski lifts. This

learning was related closely to their topic and a recent piece of art work. They worked collaboratively using a range of construction skills, including measuring and cutting. They enjoyed solving problems jointly and worked closely together to write instructions for the project.

- Teachers have constructed curriculum maps that ensure full coverage of the national curriculum and a progression in skills development. This work is carefully monitored and is continuously being adjusted to ensure that it meets the needs of all pupils. Current work on assessment and vocabulary development is strengthening the school's delivery of the curriculum.

Next steps for the school

Leaders and those responsible for governance should ensure that:

- they build on current good practice and continue to improve outcomes for pupils through developing the mastery approach to the mathematics curriculum
- they improve attainment in key stage 1 reading by rigorously monitoring and evaluating the impact of all reading and phonics teaching interventions.

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

Yours sincerely

James Richards
Ofsted Inspector

Information about the inspection

My inspection activities included meetings with curriculum subject leaders, members of staff with responsibility for safeguarding and two governors. I also spoke to a representative from the local authority, the federation's executive headteacher and a partner school's head of school. I carried out learning walks with senior leaders in all areas of the school, briefly visiting most classes. I looked in depth at pupils' mathematics books and listened to readers from Years 1 and 2.

During the inspection I reviewed a range of school documentation. This included leaders' evaluation of the school's effectiveness, and documentation relating to assessment, SEND provision, attendance and safeguarding. I spoke with parents in the playground and held a meeting with a group of pupils. Twelve responses to Ofsted's online questionnaire, Parent View, were considered.