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Miss Monique Harlin
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Dear Miss Harlin

Short inspection of Cuxton Community Infant School

Following my visit to the school on 28 February 2017, 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 predecessor school was judged to be good in February 2011.

This school continues to be good.

The leadership team has maintained the good quality of education in the school since the last inspection. In the short time you have been at the school, the good impact of your leadership is evident. The school's vibrant culture promotes respect and tolerance. School leaders are ambitious to sustain the high standards and improve progress rates for all pupils. You have worked very effectively with school leaders to review and improve school systems. You have clearly identified aspects of teaching and learning which needed to improve and have taken effective action to address these. Pupils speak positively about your interest and enthusiasm in supporting their learning and celebrating their achievements.

The trust has been influential and effective in developing a team of highly skilled school leaders, who are well informed and model good practice. As a result, teaching continues to improve. Leaders have made effective use of training opportunities with other schools, to develop staff skills and improve pupils' learning experiences. Pupils appreciate the challenges they are given and enjoy the rewards they gain for positive attitudes and successful learning. They say, 'Teachers are really supportive.'

The inspection report of the predecessor school recommended that teachers needed to provide more tasks which were challenging and purposeful and increase pupils' ability to carry out mathematical calculations. Since that time, there have been significant changes in staffing and the school has become an academy working

effectively within The Primary First Trust. Teachers focus well on developing pupils' basic skills and providing opportunities for them to use these in all areas of learning. This resulted in strong outcomes in last year's national assessments, with current pupils' progress showing further improvement. Planning for all subjects identifies challenging tasks which support pupils' learning needs well. Outcomes in mathematics have been improving each year. The curriculum in mathematics is transformed, with a successful focus on pupils' ability to master skills. As a result, pupils have a better understanding of mathematics and are well prepared for key stage 2.

You and your staff have an accurate understanding of the needs of all pupils. Together with school leaders, you have identified and responded to areas of underperformance by taking effective action. You continue to improve the progress of all pupils, but require more time to improve consistency and embed the new practices you have introduced, to ensure that all pupils make rapid progress. Sensibly, you are also working towards better transition arrangements for children as they join the school.

Safeguarding is effective.

Safeguarding is a strength in the school. Trust representatives, governors and school leaders work together effectively to ensure that all policies and practices support a culture of safety. Staff are well trained and diligent in their duties around keeping children safe. You work effectively with the local authority to meet the needs of vulnerable pupils. When pupils are at risk, they are supported well. You promote good attendance, using positive praise and reinforcement effectively. You carefully track the reasons for absence and work closely with parents to manage situations that affect attendance. As a result, you are increasingly successful in preventing persistent absence, through engagement with parents and by encouraging pupils to come to school every day and on time.

You are proactive in keeping pupils safe. Pupils say that they feel safe, that everyone understands how to behave and that no bullying or derogatory language is accepted. Pupils can talk about the lessons and assemblies which have helped them to learn how to be safe. School leaders also provide excellent opportunities for parents to hear about issues relating to safeguarding and keeping pupils safe. Helpfully, parents are given an insight into the lessons provided for their children and receive useful advice and guidance on aspects of being safe.

Inspection findings

- To explore whether the school remained good, I focused on the following areas: the effectiveness of the support given to pupils with starting points that are lower than other pupils, including those who have special educational needs and/or disabilities; and the effectiveness of the action you have taken in response to last year's differences in outcomes for boys and girls, particularly in the Reception class. I also looked at how well current pupils are doing in mathematics, writing and reading.

- Early identification of pupils' needs is now used more effectively to improve lesson planning for pupils who have special educational needs and/or disabilities. Leaders provide staff with clear information about individual pupils and how to support them well. I observed individual and small group work, during which pupils were developing effective basic skills. These pupils' written work is developing well because they respond enthusiastically to the helpful advice teachers give. The involvement of pupils in improving their own learning is contributing well to an improved learning culture where pupils also help each other. As a result, the progress of pupils who have special educational needs and/or disabilities has improved, although it is still slightly slower than that of other pupils, particularly in mathematics.
- At the end of Reception Year in 2016, the proportion of girls reaching the expected standard and working at greater depth was significantly above national averages in many areas of learning. However, boys achieved less well, in some cases from lower starting points. You are taking effective action to address this issue. You have begun relevant work with local nursery schools so that all children are well prepared for school, and you have introduced a helpful system to ensure that all children in Reception class access all the areas of learning and development. You have also refreshed the way adults assess and record children's achievements. These helpful developments in the early years are not yet firmly established.
- The curriculum has been reviewed in all year groups to include activities which will reflect the differing interests of pupils. As a result, pupils' engagement in learning has increased. The new curriculum continues to develop well in all year groups with a suitable focus on pupils mastering skills and applying them.
- In 2016, key stage 1 assessments in Year 2 showed that pupils made good progress in reading, writing and mathematics. Pupils make good use of teacher support and the targets they are given to help them to improve. They are supported well by the 'assessment ambassador' scheme which motivates and encourages them. Teachers make good use of information about pupils' progress to ensure that teaching fills gaps in pupils' knowledge, skills and understanding, consolidates their learning and sets new challenges. Skilful support from school and trust leaders has improved teachers' effectiveness in planning, monitoring and checking their work. As a result, pupils' achievement continues to improve.
- Where necessary, teachers are being well supported by school leaders to develop their confidence and skills rapidly, particularly to increase the pace and challenge of teaching.

Next steps for the school

Leaders and those responsible for governance should ensure that:

- work continues to ensure that all teaching is as effective as the best
- recent improvements in teaching in the Reception Year are embedded, including the work with nursery schools to support children's increasingly successful transition into school.

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

Yours sincerely

Ann McCarthy
Ofsted Inspector

Information about the inspection

During the inspection, I held discussions with you, senior and middle leaders, the chair of governors and representatives from the trust, about your evaluation of the school's effectiveness and plans for continuing improvements. Together, you and I visited classes, where we observed pupils learning, spoke to some and examined their written work. I visited other lessons and observed one-to-one and small group teaching. I met with assessment ambassadors and other pupil representatives. I looked carefully at the 43 responses from parents to Ofsted's online questionnaire Parent View, and the responses to Ofsted's staff survey. I evaluated documents related to school improvement, safeguarding, pupils' progress and attendance, the school's website, a range of policies and your safeguarding procedures.