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Mary Gurr
Headteacher
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Dear Mrs Gurr

Short inspection of Hatfield Peverel Infant School

Following my visit to the school on 28 March 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 the school was judged to be good in October 2012.

This school continues to be good.

The leadership team has maintained the good quality of education in the school since the last inspection. Accurate identification of priorities for improvement and collaboration with local authority advisers have ensured that swift and effective actions have been put in place where required.

Since arriving at the school in January 2017, you have continued to drive improvements initiated prior to taking up your post and taken effective action to enhance the quality of learning still further. You have maintained the positive ethos of the school in which every child feels valued and enjoys learning. You, your staff and governors are extremely accurate in your evaluation of the school's strengths and areas for improvement and are committed to driving continued improvement.

Mathematics and English leaders contribute effectively to school improvement planning. They create tailored action plans based on accurate evaluation. They check the progress that pupils make in their areas of responsibility. They have benefited from appropriate professional development, including the opportunity to visit and learn from best practice in other schools. In turn, they provide training for other members of staff in the school. Where needed, initiatives and resources have been put in place and teachers challenged and supported to hone their skills.

Governors are well informed and committed. They add strength to the leadership of the school. They are well organised and clear about their strategic and statutory roles and duties.

Pupils embrace the school motto 'Love learning, investigate ideas, have fun!' They feel happy, safe and well looked after. They enjoy school, especially the recently introduced lunchtime clubs. This is reflected in their high attendance. One commented, 'we love all our teachers'. Pupils' behaviour is always excellent. They have very positive attitudes to their learning. They take pride in their work, which is well-presented. Pupils appreciate how the school mascot ERIC (Effort, Respect, Independence and Communication Skills) supports their learning. Together with the school's 'YETI' approach (I can't do it yet but I can with a little help and some extra effort), this helps pupils to develop resilience and a 'can do' approach to their learning.

Since your arrival, you have acted swiftly to strengthen existing initiatives such as introducing more interesting topics for children to write about. The impact of this is evident in pupils' books already. Pupils are writing for longer and producing better-quality pieces of work. You have also strengthened existing initiatives in the early years, to ensure that children make more rapid progress in their writing. You have accurately identified priorities for further improvement, for example the need to review the system that staff use to record information about pupils' progress because you have identified that this is not as efficient as it could be.

Parents have a high level of confidence in the school and its leadership. Almost all of those who responded during the inspection would recommend the school to other parents. A typical comment from parents was: 'I am very happy with the school and the progress my daughter is making. I would wholeheartedly recommend this school.'

Safeguarding is effective.

There is a strong culture of safeguarding at the school. As the designated safeguarding lead, you ensure that all staff and governors receive regular and up-to-date training around all aspects of child protection. Staff have the skills needed to identify potential signs of harm, abuse or extremism. Safeguarding is a regular feature of staff meetings and you ensure that you update staff when there are changes in government advice. All staff are vigilant in spotting concerns and these are reported immediately, actioned promptly and followed up tenaciously. Checks on the suitability of staff to work with pupils are rigorous. A designated safeguarding governor makes regular checks on safeguarding procedures and closely monitors attendance.

Pupils say they feel safe. They learn how to keep safe, for example when using the internet. They are confident that adults will listen if they have any worries. They have a good understanding of how to stay healthy and why regular exercise is important for this.

Inspection findings

- I had several areas to explore with you. The first area for consideration was how well leaders ensure that all pupils attend well. This was because in 2016, the absence and persistent absence rates for some pupils who were known to be entitled to free school meals were very high. I found that you have robust procedures in place to follow up on absences and to encourage all pupils to attend regularly. There are rewards for high attendance, regular reminders to parents about the importance of regular attendance and timely contact and support if any child's attendance starts to slip. Because of the actions taken to improve attendance, the overall attendance rate is above average. Upon investigation, I determined that the high persistent absence percentage was explained by the illness of a very few pupils.
- My second area of focus was the early years. Making better use of the outside learning area had been a recommendation in the previous inspection report. Also, the proportion of children meeting the expected standard of a good level of development was below that seen nationally at the end of both 2015 and 2016. Outcomes were at their lowest in 2015. Differences in outcomes for boys and girls were wider than those seen nationally. The school's baseline assessments of children at the start of the Reception Year show that many start school with skills which are below those typically seen and require additional support to develop their speech and language skills. In 2014, very few children started school with the skills expected for their age. Despite making good progress from low starting points, the proportion who reached the expected standard by the end of the Reception Year in 2015 was low.
- These children, now in Year 2, have benefited from effective additional support since the end of their Reception Year and consequently many have made accelerated progress. School assessment information and work in books indicates that most pupils are on track to reach at least the expected standard by the end of the year, and that differences between boys' and girls' attainment are diminishing. This represents good progress for these children from the end of the Reception Year.
- Children in the current Reception Year benefit from rich and vibrant learning environments both indoors and outdoors. These promote learning well across all areas. Recent changes to provide more opportunities for children to write, and especially to encourage boys to write, are having a positive effect on the quality of children's writing. This is evidenced by work in children's books and their learning journeys which show that all are making good progress from their starting points.
- Writing was the third area of focus. The proportion of pupils who achieved the expected standard in 2016 was in line with that seen nationally. However, the proportion exceeding the expected standard was lower than that seen nationally. Boys did less well than girls and some pupils, including both boys and girls, did not make the progress they should from the end of the early years.
- The school has rightly prioritised writing as an area for improvement and has already taken effective action. A new approach to teaching writing has been

successfully introduced throughout the school. This includes planning exciting themes for pupils to write about and providing them with more opportunities to write about the topics they are interested in. During the inspection, pupils in Year 1 wrote enthusiastically and at length following the discovery of 'dinosaur footprints' on the classroom floor and the disappearance of their class monkey Milo. Writing in pupils' books shows great improvement from the start of the year and especially this term. School development plans appropriately identify further improvements to the curriculum to ensure that these improvements are sustained.

Next steps for the school

Leaders and those responsible for governance should ensure that:

- plans to further enhance the teaching of writing which build upon existing improvements in this area are fully implemented, to ensure that all pupils make good progress in their writing
- systems to record pupils' progress are refined so that they are more manageable for staff
- teaching staff in the early years continue to implement and build upon the initiatives that have been introduced during the last year to ensure that the improvements seen to date are sustained.

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

Yours sincerely

Joan Beale
Ofsted Inspector

Information about the inspection

During the inspection, I met with you, all staff and three members of the governing body. I also met with a representative from the local authority. We visited all classrooms together, observing teaching and learning and looking at pupils' books. We also looked in detail at the books and learning journeys of children in the Reception Year and pupils' writing in Year 1 and Year 2. I spoke with pupils formally and informally during breaktimes. I scrutinised all aspects of safeguarding practice. I also considered a wide range of other documentation. This included the school's own evaluation and plans for improvement and external monitoring reports. I took account of 59 responses to Parent View, Ofsted's online questionnaire, and 36 comments received electronically. I also spoke with a small number of parents when they were bringing their children to school.