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Mr Simon Gent
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Dear Mr Gent

Short inspection of Claines CofE Primary School

Following my visit to the school on 13 February 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 March 2014.

This school continues to be good.

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

'Never settle for less than your best.' This is the motto by which you focus the work of pupils and of staff. As a result, there is a culture of high expectations. You and your leadership team, including governors, know the strengths of the school and continue to build on these, but are also focusing well-targeted resources on those aspects that could be better. Pupils, staff and almost all of the parents and carers who expressed their opinion during the inspection believe in and support the work you are doing.

Pupils I spoke to are happy at school and feel that their teachers do all that they can to help them. During the inspection, I saw some interesting and engaging activities in lessons, such as a rousing retelling of 'Stick Man' by Julia Donaldson, involving each Year 1 pupil, as well as some challenging work on the topic of the sinking of the 'Titanic' in the Year 6 classroom. Pupils told me that this type of learning is typical.

You and your team have worked successfully to help develop teachers' confidence and skills. There are coherent and consistent approaches to the teaching of reading and writing, which are helping pupils to develop these crucial skills well, on the whole. Teachers are positive about the support they have received, and the good impact of this can be seen in pupils' work.

You and the deputy headteacher are at the school gate in the morning to welcome pupils. Pupils and parents like this, with some of the parents I spoke to saying that this helped to nip in the bud any problems that otherwise might have taken up more time. This also helps you to encourage the importance of good levels of attendance for all pupils. Many parents who responded to Ofsted's online questionnaire also left comments that showed their satisfaction. Two comments sum up the views of the many who responded: 'A lovely, nurturing and inclusive school. Friendly and professional staff. My child feels very happy and safe here' and 'My child is making good progress and is well cared for.'

When you became headteacher in September 2015, you reviewed the work of the school and decided that some aspects of improvement that had already started needed to be refocused. There is now greater depth to the teaching of subjects beyond English and mathematics, and teachers and leaders of subjects have greater responsibility for making improvements. Leaders are not complacent and know that there is always more that can be done to improve, and these actions are outlined in the school development plan. One of these actions relates to improving pupils' writing skills, particularly for higher-attaining pupils. While this was an area identified at the last inspection, the specific issues are different. What is really encouraging is that during this inspection there was substantial evidence that you and your team were addressing these with good impact. A further priority is to ensure that pupils consistently use accurate spelling.

Parts of the school improvement plan need to be more sharply focused on impact, with actions that are time-related and therefore will allow leaders, including governors, to evaluate more efficiently the progress being made.

A key feature of the ethos of the school is that pupils have the chance to take part in a wide range of opportunities and experience success. One way you do this is by enabling all pupils to learn a musical instrument. Another is by providing opportunities for extra-curricular activities; during the inspection the girls' football team successfully competed in a county finals competition, taking the silver medal.

Safeguarding is effective.

You have an excellent understanding of the risks that your pupils might face, including when they have left this school. With the governors, you are vigilant to signs of pupils being unhappy or at risk and make sure that there are opportunities for pupils to understand how to keep themselves safe. Pupils feel safe in school and believe that there is always an adult they can go to for help if needed. Parents also feel that their children are safe. Pupils explained that the school's friendly atmosphere and pupils' good behaviour contribute to them feeling safe and secure. Pupils told me that on the rare occasions when they feel that their classmates are being unkind to them, this gets resolved quickly.

The leadership team has ensured that all safeguarding arrangements are fit for purpose. You evaluate the impact of training that staff have had so that you know it is making a difference. Leaders work well with other agencies to support pupils and their families when this is needed.

Inspection findings

- Leaders have a realistic view of the strengths of the school as well as what needs to be done to make further improvements. You and your team have a range of activities to monitor the impact of leaders' and teachers' work. You know how well pupils in each class are doing and you hold teachers to account well for this.
- The consistent and coherent approach to the teaching of writing means that pupils currently in the school are making good progress in their development of these skills, including when writing in subjects such as science and history.
- Year 6 pupils who left the school in 2016 and 2017 did not make enough progress in writing. In 2017, at the end of Year 2, fewer pupils than average attained the expected standard in writing. We explored this in detail during the inspection and there was good evidence that you had identified this underperformance last academic year. You have taken steps to reduce the risk and, crucially, now have measures in place to prevent this happening again.
- Leaders are working well with teachers to make sure that higher-attaining pupils are provided with even more challenge in writing. This is a priority across the school, and teachers are being well supported through targeted training and development opportunities. I saw a good example of the impact of this in Year 5. Pupils were composing effective descriptions, and pupils' work confirmed that there was good development of these skills since the beginning of the school year.
- Pupils across the school are developing writing skills well, including when writing in subjects such as science and history. A further priority for improvement is to help pupils be consistent in their accurate use of spelling.
- During the inspection, we also explored how effective the strategies in place are to help pupils develop good reading skills during Years 1 and 2. This was because test results in 2017 showed that pupils' levels of attainment in reading at the end of Year 2 were low. These disappointing test results are, in part, due to individual pupils' circumstances. However, you have taken clear and effective steps to ensure that current Year 3 pupils are doing better in reading, as well as embedding the more coordinated approach to the teaching of reading throughout the school.
- Current pupils are developing well in their reading skills and this was clear from reviewing pupils' books and listening to some pupils read. Leaders have made sure that pupils have access to good-quality texts during lessons as well as in the school library.
- As a result of training and support, including careful assessment of pupils, teachers have a very good understanding of the particular skills in reading that their pupils need to develop. They then plan their teaching to address this. For example, I saw a good example of the impact of this in the Year 3 class, where pupils were focusing on how to summarise a text effectively.
- Pupils have good strategies to work out how to read unfamiliar words, and some of the pupils I listened to read did so with flair and excellent expression. Pupils attain consistently well in the phonics screening check at the end of Year 1.
- Leaders have worked sensitively and diligently with parents to help them understand the importance of making sure that their children attend school

regularly. This approach has had good success, and the relatively low levels of attendance for some groups of pupils last year have been reversed.

Next steps for the school

Leaders and those responsible for governance should ensure that:

- the successful strategies to develop pupils' writing skills, particularly for higher-attaining pupils, are further embedded
- pupils are consistently accurate in their use of spelling
- the school improvement plan is sharply focused on impact, with actions that are time-related and therefore will allow leaders and governors to evaluate more efficiently the progress being made.

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

Yours sincerely

James McNeillie
Her Majesty's Inspector

Information about the inspection

- Meetings were held with the headteacher and other leaders, as well as the chair and vice-chair of the governing body and three other governors.
- I spoke to parents, teachers and pupils during the inspection.
- I also considered the 106 responses to Parent View, Ofsted's online questionnaire, as well as the school's own recent survey of parents' views. I also considered the six responses to Ofsted's staff survey.
- Short visits were made to classes on the morning and afternoon of the inspection, accompanied by the headteacher.
- Various school documents were scrutinised, including the school's self-evaluation and information about pupils' progress, behaviour, attendance and safety.