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Mrs Ann Beardall
Headteacher
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Dear Mrs Beardall

Short inspection of Great Massingham CofE Primary School

Following my visit to the school on 11 December 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 February 2015.

This school continues to be good.

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

Your school's ethos is central to its continued improvement. Values such as respect, responsibility, reverence, perseverance and courage are communicated effectively, and are understood by pupils and staff alike. These values are lived out by members of the school community. One pupil said that 'everyone tries to stick to them'. Consequently, staff and pupils, and pupils and their classmates, develop very positive relationships so that pupils make strong progress within a caring and supportive learning environment. While you and your leaders are passionate about the opportunities for pupils attending a small school, your actions to develop a federation across two schools have brought a wider range of benefits. Leadership has been enhanced across both schools: you and your leaders have broadened the curriculum; staff plan and assess together, and pupils benefit from a wider variety of trips and visits.

Pupils' behaviour is a strength of the school. Pupils are friendly, polite and have excellent attitudes to learning. They told me that they enjoy learning and could explain how they are making progress in a range of subjects. Pupils particularly value the benefits of working with your partner school. They said that they enjoy working across the two schools to study French, Spanish and science. They also commented that 'federation days', where pupils from both schools work together, allow them to build friendships and develop their confidence ahead of moving to

secondary school.

Your staff say that they enjoy working at the school and all parents and carers who responded to Parent View, Ofsted's online questionnaire, would recommend the school to others. One parent, reflecting the views of others, commented: 'The school has a very welcoming, family feel. Older pupils are encouraged to bond with younger pupils and as a result, my child has made friends very quickly with children across the school.'

Your leaders are accurate in their assessment of the school's overall effectiveness and its strengths and weaknesses; priorities for improvement are appropriate and your leaders know what is expected of them. Consequently, the school has continued to improve since the previous inspection. Pupils value the feedback that they now receive from their teachers and they use it to help them improve their work. In addition, pupils' overall progress has improved in mathematics.

Governors provide your leaders with effective support and challenge: they know the school very well, have a wide and appropriate range of skills and actively seek, and act upon, pupils' views. Governors support the school's development through their contributions at full governing body meetings, their various committee meetings and their visits to meet school leaders. They ensure that both schools in the federation work together for everyone's benefit. However, governors' ability to evaluate the school's work and hold leaders to account is sometimes weakened because the expected outcomes in the school's improvement plan are not always clear and measurable.

Safeguarding is effective.

The leadership team has ensured that safeguarding arrangements are fit for purpose.

Governors have a clear understanding of their safeguarding duties and are effective in carrying them out. You and your leaders undertake all appropriate checks on staff, which a nominated member of the governing body scrutinises on a regular basis. Your staff are well trained; they know how to identify any signs that pupils are at risk and what actions to take should they have any concerns. Your staff understand the school's safeguarding systems; they say that safeguarding is a part of the school's culture. Safeguarding records are well kept, and any child protection referrals are monitored closely.

All pupils who responded to the Ofsted pupil survey, and all parents who responded to Parent View, agreed that pupils are safe at school. Pupils said that, on the very rare occasions it happens, bullying is dealt with swiftly and effectively. They said that they are well looked after and supported by the adults in the school. Pupils talked positively about how they are taught to stay safe through personal, social and health education lessons that cover topics such as bullying, road safety and staying safe online.

Inspection findings

- I pursued several lines of enquiry to ascertain whether the school continues to be good. My first considered how effectively leaders are ensuring that current pupils make strong progress in their writing.
- You and your leaders have identified the reasons why pupils' progress in writing has been slower than in reading; this included poor structure in weaker writing, and a limited use of complex vocabulary in stronger writing. Teachers and teaching assistants have received a range of additional training that has improved their practice. In addition, alongside colleagues from across the federation, teachers now plan more closely and check the quality of pupils' work more effectively. New strategies have been introduced to help improve the quality of writing. For example, pupils in key stage 2 undertake a weekly 'Friday free write' where they write about a topic that captures their imagination in whatever format they choose.
- Pupils' overall progress in writing is improving throughout the school. Pupils make strong progress because their teachers plan activities that are closely matched to their starting points. Pupils' enjoyment of writing is fuelled by the enthusiasm of their teachers. Teachers question pupils well, they challenge them to develop their writing and they provide them with helpful advice about how to improve their work. Although the improving quality of writing is evident in most pupils' books, not all pupils have made the progress over time that you and your leaders expect. This is because the recently introduced actions to improve writing in English lessons, and across the curriculum, are not yet fully embedded.
- My second line of enquiry was about how successfully you and your leaders are supporting the progress of disadvantaged pupils and those with special educational needs and/or disabilities (SEND). Your leaders have successfully identified the factors which make learning more difficult for these pupils and they communicate these well to staff. Teachers have a clear understanding of the needs of the pupils in their classes and this is reflected in their planning. Communication between teachers and teaching assistants is a strength and enables pupils to move on quickly in lessons. Your leaders use a range of additional strategies, including working with other professionals from outside the school, when extra support is needed. Your leaders assess pupils' progress closely to monitor the impact of the support that pupils receive and refocus their actions if necessary.
- Consequently, disadvantaged pupils and those with SEND make strong progress overall in reading, writing and mathematics. There are a small number of pupils whose progress in these areas is below your leaders' expectations, but they are catching up. Your leaders ensure that all disadvantaged pupils and those with SEND can fully participate in all subjects and the extra-curricular activities on offer.
- Finally, I checked the extent to which your leaders ensure that pupils attend school regularly and behave well. Your leaders are rigorous in their monitoring of attendance and they work closely with pupils and their families, offering support when required. As a result, the proportion of pupils who are absent, or

persistently absent, from school has fallen in recent years and is now in line with the national average. Your leaders' approaches to ensuring that pupils' behaviour is positive are equally effective. Staff have high expectations of pupils' behaviour and communicate them clearly. There are few behaviour incidents and they are dealt with appropriately. Pupils behave very well in and around school. They have positive attitudes to learning, respect their teachers and value the rewards that they receive for their good behaviour.

Next steps for the school

Leaders and those responsible for governance should ensure that they:

- embed the recently introduced strategies to ensure that pupils' progress in writing, including in subjects other than English, continues to improve
- improve the rigour of improvement planning by including clear and measurable outcomes that enable leaders and governors to evaluate the school's progress more effectively.

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

Yours sincerely

Daniel Gee
Her Majesty's Inspector

Information about the inspection

During the inspection, I met with you, other school leaders and staff, governors and a group of pupils. I had a telephone conversation with a representative from the local authority. I visited every class to observe teaching, look at pupils' books and to see them at work. In addition, I reviewed a sample of English workbooks alongside school leaders. I scrutinised the school's evaluation of its own effectiveness, its development plan and other documentation, including the record of pre-employment checks and child protection records. I considered the seven responses from parents to the Ofsted online questionnaire, Parent View, alongside the four free-text responses. I also reviewed the 20 pupil responses to the Ofsted pupil survey.