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Dear Miss O'Brien

Short inspection of Clavering Primary School

Following my visit to the school on 21 November 2018 with Richard Knowles, Ofsted Inspector, 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 2014.

Based on the evidence gathered during this short inspection, I have identified some priorities for improvement which I advise the school to address. In light of these priorities, the school's next inspection will be a full section 5 inspection. **There is no change to the school's current overall effectiveness grade of good as a result of this inspection.**

The vast majority of parents and carers are supportive of the school's work. Many parents who responded to Ofsted's online questionnaire, Parent View, praised the caring staff, sporting activities and the numerous events for pupils to develop personal skills, knowledge and understanding. One parent spoke for a number of others when saying, 'I appreciate the efforts the school makes to be outward looking by creating opportunities for the children to understand the world beyond our small town.'

Staff morale is high. Staff say that they receive clear direction from leaders and are encouraged to trial new ideas. A large number of staff who responded to Ofsted's staff survey valued leaders' efforts to consider their workload and well-being when introducing new policies or changes to working practices.

You have high aspirations for all pupils. The school's ethos of 'dream, believe and achieve together' describes a collective determination for pupils and staff to work in partnership. This is exemplified by the very strong relationships between pupils and staff. Pupils are polite, well mannered and genuinely interested in the thoughts and feelings of their friends. When appropriately challenged, pupils are motivated and eager to impress their teacher. Instances of poor behaviour are very rare.

At the last inspection, leaders were asked to improve the quality of teaching in

order to raise achievement further. Inspection evidence demonstrates that the quality of teaching is variable. A large proportion of teaching is characterised by effective planning, strong questioning, high expectations and an insistence that pupils discover answers for themselves. For example, in a Year 1 mathematics lesson, pupils were learning how to estimate and calculate the difference between their estimation and the answer. The teacher's probing questions and frequent use of subject-specific vocabulary, such as 'estimate', ensured that pupils could describe the various stages of the calculation, including unfamiliar mathematical words. However, there are some teachers who do not consider pupils' prior assessment information when planning their lessons. Some teachers ask pupils to complete activities that are not closely matched to their starting points. When this occurs, pupils do not make as much progress because the work is too easy or too difficult for them. Furthermore, teachers' knowledge and understanding in subjects other than English and mathematics vary. When teachers are less confident in their own subject knowledge, they can sometimes provide pupils with inaccurate information or explanations that lack detail. Scrutiny of pupils' work demonstrates that in some year groups, pupils' progress in history and geography is slow. This is because pupils are not given opportunities to investigate topics fully or address earlier misconceptions.

Published data and unvalidated results for the key stage 1 and key stage 2 tests in 2018 show that the proportion of pupils reaching at least the expected standard in reading, writing and mathematics continues to be consistently higher than the national average. The proportion of pupils who achieve the higher standards for their age is also above average. However, you acknowledge that the proportion of key stage 1 pupils who achieve above the expected standard in reading, writing and mathematics has been declining for the last two years. Similarly, by the end of key stage 2, pupils in 2018 made progress that was broadly in line with the national average in reading, writing and mathematics. Previously, pupils' progress was stronger. The school's own information highlights that the most able pupils continue to make the least progress over time. You have highlighted this issue to staff and led training on the theme of 'challenge' for the most able. However, there is still much work to do to ensure that all pupils are challenged sufficiently in lessons, particularly the most able.

Safeguarding is effective.

The leadership team has ensured that all safeguarding arrangements are fit for purpose. However, during the inspection, leaders were asked to resolve some minor administrative errors on the single central record, which is the document of checks to ensure that staff are safe to work with children.

Scrutiny of case files and documentation demonstrates that leaders are swift to respond to any concerns or nagging doubts relating to pupils' safety and welfare. Leaders work closely with external agencies to ensure that pupils in need of professional support can access the support required.

Leaders ensure that staff receive regular training to help them recognise and

respond to signs of abuse or harm. However, leaders have not ensured that statutory guidance is shared beyond the teaching staff. Consequently, some staff are not aware of the most up-to-date advice relating to keeping children safe.

Nevertheless, pupils say that they feel safe. They are taught about risks and how to stay safe. For example, pupils can recall advice and guidance relating to 'stranger danger' and how to stay safe online. Pupils have a detailed understanding of what constitutes bullying. They say that bullying is very rare in school.

Inspection findings

- My first line of enquiry during this inspection focused on pupils' attendance. Rates of attendance fell below the national average for the first time in 2017. The school's own information shows that pupils' attendance improved slightly in 2018 but was lower than in previous years. In 2017, persistent absence rates were above the national average for the first time. The proportion of pupils who were persistently absent increased in 2018. Leaders have identified this as an immediate priority. They say that a large number of absences are due to family holidays. Leaders follow up pupil absences swiftly. They involve the education welfare officer from the local authority to help support discussions between families and school. Leaders send regular attendance messages home via the school newsletter. It is too early to tell whether leaders' strategies will lead to a sustained improvement in pupils' attendance.
- The next line of enquiry focused on the quality of teaching, learning and assessment, particularly how teachers challenge pupils. Some teachers build well on pupils' prior understanding. This is because they have a detailed knowledge of pupils' strengths and weaknesses via a careful analysis of previous work and assessment information. These teachers plan meaningful activities that encourage pupils to apply skills to different concepts. For example, pupils in key stage 2 were required to use their poetry skills to write an extended piece of writing in geography that described the water cycle. Where learning is less effective, teachers do not use the considerable pupil information they have at their disposal when planning their lessons. Many pupils, from their different starting points, are not supported to reach the standards of which they are capable. Leaders' analysis of current pupils' progress demonstrates that very few pupils across the school are reaching the highest levels in reading, writing and mathematics.
- My final line of enquiry focused on children in early years and pupils in key stage 1. Usually, three in every four children at the school leave Reception having reached a good level of development. This is because staff in early years have developed strong lines of communication between the school and home. Parents value the opportunity to view children's learning journals and to support their children with homework. Staff encourage children to write frequently. By the end of Reception, many children can write at length. However, teachers sometimes give children tasks to complete but overlook the detail in their instructions. Consequently, when some children are playing, they lack focus or are unable to describe the aim of each activity.

- The school's focus on children's early reading skills, especially phonics, is a strength. The proportions of pupils passing the phonics screening check between 2016 and 2018 have been above average. Pupils have many opportunities to read to staff. When they do, staff support pupils in their comprehension of the text by asking searching questions. Pupils say that they are encouraged to read often. There is a wide range of reading books in the school library that match the sounds pupils know from their phonics lessons.
- Although not a key line of enquiry, the inspection team found that the quality of leadership and management at all levels is inconsistent. Leaders, including governors, have an over-generous view of the school. Leaders frequently monitor and evaluate their work and that of others. However, often the focus of the monitoring activity will be on compliance rather than the effect of leaders' or teachers' actions. The pertinent issues that leaders identify in their improvement plans, such as challenge in lessons, are not always a focus during their scheduled observations in lessons or work scrutiny. Consequently, improvements in the quality of teaching have been slower because less effective teaching has not been identified quickly enough.
- The curriculum for subjects other than English and mathematics is planned and sequenced to develop knowledge for future learning. However, leaders do not always review how successful the curriculum is. Some pupils progress to more difficult topics or concepts before mastering the basics or the skills they need to be able to understand more challenging work.

Next steps for the school

Leaders and those responsible for governance should ensure that:

- the systems they use to ensure that staff are safe to work with children are improved and checked regularly, and that all staff are familiar with and understand statutory safeguarding guidance
- they work closely with families to make sure that pupils' rates of absence and persistent absence are reduced
- they develop their monitoring and evaluation skills, so that they know the effect of their actions and that of teachers on pupils' learning and progress
- inconsistencies in the quality of teaching are reduced, by ensuring that teachers use pupils' prior assessment information accurately to plan work that meets pupils' needs.

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

Yours sincerely

Lee Elliott
Her Majesty's Inspector

Information about the inspection

During this one-day inspection, inspectors met with you and other members of the leadership team. We accompanied leaders during observations in classrooms and, together, we reviewed and evaluated pupils' written work. Inspectors listened to a group of pupils read and talked to governors, teachers, pupils and parents. I analysed the school's website and evaluated a wide range of additional documentation prior to the inspection. Inspectors viewed the school's record of suitability checks on staff, safeguarding policies and associated files, in addition to attendance and behaviour logs. We reviewed assessment information about pupils' attainment and progress, as well as leaders' action plans and evaluations. Inspectors took into account the paper copies of Ofsted's staff questionnaire and 78 responses from parents to Ofsted's online questionnaire, Parent View.