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Mrs Nina McKay
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Dear Mrs McKay

Short inspection of Kelvedon Hatch Community Primary School

Following my visit to the school on 8 November 2016, 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 May 2012.

This school continues to be good.

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

You were appointed to the school in September 2016, having taken some time during the summer term to liaise with the retiring headteacher. Since taking up your role, you have established the school's priorities and areas for development, and worked very closely with the governing body. Staff are very supportive of your leadership of the school and share your high aspirations for all pupils. The whole team has settled quickly this term and the relationships with the pupils are equally well developed. You already know the vast majority of pupils well.

Since the previous inspection, not only has there been a change in headteacher, there has also been a change in the governing body. There is now a new chair of the governing body who took on this role only a few weeks ago but who was previously a member of the governing body. Almost all teaching staff are different from those who were present in 2012. The school appointed a new deputy headteacher just over three years ago. You have established an effective working relationship with all members of the newly formed senior leadership team. This partnership is already showing promise. There is evidence, from the work we did at the inspection with some of those leaders, that further improvement is clearly possible, adding capacity to the leadership of the school. You have been very proactive in sourcing support, effective challenge and guidance in a variety of

guises. Staff are already beginning to benefit from that external expertise. This is clearly evident from your monitoring of teaching, learning and assessment and indeed, the progress of pupils in this first half term.

You have quickly evaluated the school's strengths and weaknesses and what needs to be improved. You have identified leaders to take the identified priorities forward, apace, while developing future leadership within the school along the way. Your high expectations are evident. Actions you have put in place, and those that are planned, are reasonable and timely. The day-to-day leadership of the school is effective.

There were several areas in the previous inspection report that leaders were asked to improve, including securing good progress for all pupils. The work that you have thus far done to establish the accuracy of past assessment information and ensure that progress for pupils is correctly identified, is paying dividends. We looked closely at pupils' books from this and last academic year. It is clear that all pupils, including those who are disadvantaged and those who have special educational needs and/or disabilities, are making at least expected progress in reading, writing and mathematics. There was also evidence of a growing proportion of pupils who are exceeding expected progress, including the most vulnerable pupils in the school. We agreed that there is still a need for further challenge at all levels within a small minority of classes, particularly for more-able pupils. They told me that sometimes their work is not challenging enough and 'is too easy', particularly in mathematics. One said, 'Sometimes I choose the hardest level of challenge and the teacher moves me back to the middle one.' Pupils are clearly keen to learn, are articulate and very able.

Pupils spoken to during the inspection were mostly clear about what they were learning and many of them about how they can improve their work. They know that adults will help them. This was demonstrated extremely effectively in one key stage 2 class where pupils know that they can go to sit at the front of the class at any point during the lesson. As small groups of pupils come to this space, the teacher expertly addresses any misconceptions immediately and pupils quickly return to their work with renewed enthusiasm and clarity. Pupils say that the 'working walls' help them, as does teachers' marking. In some classes pupils readily 'use [their] learning skills' to help them before they look elsewhere for support. The majority of teachers follow the school's new marking and feedback policy. Where they do, pupils respond to teachers' comments and teachers identify next steps in pupils' learning. However, this is not as consistent as it could be in a small minority of classes.

You have rightly identified the need to improve pupils' outcomes in writing and spelling. You have put together a working party to explore the way forward with this important aspect. In the meantime, you recognise that teachers' response to correcting misspelt words is inconsistent. Evidence in pupils' books shows that pupils therefore repeat errors of even the most familiar words. However, the overall quality of writing is improving. This is because you have ensured that teachers have a better understanding of how to approach the planning for pupils' successful

writing. Teachers do not, however, plan enough opportunities for pupils to write at length and to develop their basic English skills.

Pupils say that they enjoy reading and use their phonic skills well in reading. Children get a good start in the Reception Year; some seen during the inspection were already using their phonic skills well to read and write simple words. Considering that the early years leader has identified that recognition of sounds and letters was poor at the start of the year, the children in the Reception class have already made very good progress. The proportion of pupils in Year 1 in 2016 who reached the required standard in the phonics check was lower than it has been in the past. As a result of this, you have insisted that phonics is taught and practised twice a day, rather than once as was previously the case. Inspection evidence showed that this is already having a positive impact on pupils in Years 1 and 2.

Another area identified for improvement in 2012 was to reduce the impact of persistent absence on pupils' achievement. The attendance of the most vulnerable pupils still is not good enough. However, tracking of these pupils is robust and regular. Supported by the governing body and the local authority, you work as closely as you can with parents of these pupils to remove any barriers to them getting to school regularly and on time. You are in the process of arranging a meeting with parents to ensure that they understand the detrimental effect that absence can have on pupils' achievement. The continual raising of the profile of regular attendance is beginning to have an impact on a very small minority of these pupils. However, you are determined to ensure that all pupils attend school at least in line with the national average and this remains a priority for leaders.

Safeguarding is effective.

You have quickly ensured that all safeguarding arrangements meet statutory requirements. Governors have carried out an audit of all safeguarding requirements and have therefore ensured that robust procedures for the safety and well-being of all pupils are applied with rigour. As soon as you started at the school, you ensured that all staff were fully trained in safeguarding, and that the training reflects the latest guidance for keeping children safe. You and your governors are in the process of reviewing school policies to ensure that they reflect the latest government guidance, including that to counter radicalisation.

As the designated lead with specific responsibility for child protection, you work very closely with staff from other agencies when any safeguarding concerns arise. Records related to child protection are of high quality. You and your special educational needs assistant are tenacious in following up on actions by, for example, social care. As a result of your and your staff's vigilance, it is clear from examples seen during the inspection that vulnerable pupils are safer than they might otherwise be, and their needs are better met.

Pupils say that they feel very safe in their 'fabulous, amazing' school. They demonstrate a good awareness of how to keep themselves safe when using the internet both in school and at home. They understand that bullying 'is when

someone constantly hurts you in some way'. They recognise the different forms that bullying can take, and say that there is very little bullying. The behaviour of pupils, they say, is good. Should there be any incidents of poor behaviour, pupils say that adults deal with it quickly. Inspection evidence confirms that there are very few recorded incidents of poor behaviour in the classroom or playground. Play leaders enjoy their role of supporting younger pupils in the playground and take this role seriously. Parents who responded to Ofsted's online survey, Parent View, and those who responded to the school's own survey, say that their children are happy and safe and enjoy coming to school. One said, 'I cannot praise this school enough for all their teaching and nurturing of my children.'

Support from the local authority has been appropriate, given the school's previous inspection grading. However, in the summer term, the local authority recognised that some disappointing results in 2016, coupled with a change of leadership, would warrant the school receiving additional support. This has been put in place, including the brokering of an experienced headteacher mentor, of whom you are making effective use. The effective relationships that you have already fostered with other schools locally and external personnel provide partnership, support and challenge to you and your staff.

You have done considerable work on the school's website since the summer, and it is now compliant. However, some aspects of it are currently being updated to reflect the new leadership of the school and the most recent editions of school policies.

Inspection findings

- The school's staff and leadership have changed almost completely since the previous inspection. Leaders have ensured that there is improvement in the areas identified in the previous inspection report in 2012, in particular in teaching, learning and assessment. You are further developing the school's assessment system to ensure that all leaders make effective use of the information to monitor whole-school performance. In so doing, you recognise that improvement planning at all levels is not yet sufficiently tightly focused on ensuring that pupils make the best progress they can. The impact of actions you have thus far taken on pupils' achievement is not yet reflected well in your self-evaluation of the school.
- The assessments at the end of key stage 1 since 2012 show that pupils in Years 1 and 2 are doing better than they previously were in reading, writing and mathematics, despite a slight dip in 2016. The proportion of children in the Reception Year that achieved a good level of development has been above the national average for three years. Over time, pupils make good progress from their starting points, including those who have special educational needs and/or disabilities and those pupils who are disadvantaged.

- Pupils' attainment and progress in reading, writing and mathematics at the end of key stage 2 have risen since 2012 to above the national average in 2015. In 2016, the proportion of pupils attaining the expected standard in reading and mathematics was at least in line with the national average. However, the proportion reaching the higher standard was below average. Writing attainment for all pupils was well below average. The progress of pupils in reading and mathematics was above the national average and, once again, writing was below average.
- There are some very good examples of teachers planning activities that are appropriate to individual needs and that offer challenge to all pupils. In some classes, pupils regularly select a challenge that they feel matches where they are in their learning. They respond well and are eager to progress to the next challenge. The impact of this new strategy is absolutely clear both in lessons and in pupils' work so far this year. In these growing examples, improvement can be seen in pupils' subsequent work. However, this is not yet consistent in a minority of classes. There is not a consistent approach to the teaching and correction of pupils' spelling. This is something that you have identified as having had a negative impact on pupils' outcomes in writing at the end of Year 6 in 2016. The working party that you have put together to explore the school's way forward with this important aspect will report back in the near future.
- Partnership between parents and leaders at the school is growing following a year of many changes in staffing and leadership. Parents are very supportive of the school's work. You have rightly prioritised ensuring that pupils attend regularly and that parents understand the negative impact that poor attendance can have on pupils' achievement. You work well with the appropriate external personnel to ensure that no pupils are missing from education, particularly the most vulnerable pupils. The good relationships that you have built with the local community in such a short period of time are to your credit. This work you have already planned to continue in order to develop further the partnership with parents.
- Scrutiny of pupils' work in writing and mathematics both in this and the last academic year, throughout the school, shows that a growing proportion of pupils are making good progress. Although there is sometimes a discrepancy in one year group or one area of reading, writing or mathematics, this is not commonplace. You and your staff have identified that some pupils in the older year groups have gaps in their learning. You have put in place rigorous pupil progress meetings with staff to ensure that pupils who either already are, or are at risk of, falling behind are given appropriate support.
- You have quickly identified the strengths of staff and given appropriate support and challenge to those who need it. The fruits of your labour are very clear to see both in improvements in teachers' practice and impact on pupils' progress since the beginning of the academic year. You have worked very closely with a range of external personnel to ensure that staff have visited other schools and worked alongside experienced leaders. Staff say that this has been very beneficial to them. As a result, you now have a growing body of good practice within your own school, which you are beginning to use to everyone's benefit.

- Because of good support that you and your special educational needs assistant have put in place, the small proportion of pupils throughout the school who have special educational needs and/or disabilities make good and often very good progress. Well-trained support staff work closely with these pupils under the guidance of teachers who better understand the responsibility they have for the progress of these pupils. You have accessed appropriate external support, for example with speech and language development, and ensured that adults are able to effectively build upon this support within the classroom.
- The vast majority of disadvantaged pupils currently in the school make good progress in their reading and mathematics. A growing number are achieving well in writing because they are receiving additional support, particularly those who are the more able pupils.

Next steps for the school

Leaders and those responsible for governance should ensure that:

- improvement planning takes sharper account of the impact of leaders' actions on pupils' progress
- teachers plan work that challenges all pupils and enables them to make the best progress consistently across the school, in particular the most able pupils
- teachers provide more regular opportunities for pupils to write at length so that they practise their basic English skills, and in particular spelling
- work continues with all parents to ensure that attendance of the most vulnerable pupils improves.

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

Ruth Brock
Her Majesty's Inspector

Information about the inspection

I met with you, the deputy headteacher, leads for mathematics and the special educational needs assistant. I also met with four members of the governing body, including the chair, and a representative of the local authority. I reviewed a wide range of documentation, including your monitoring and evaluation of teaching, policies, attendance information, and governing body meeting minutes. Together with your senior leaders, we looked at numerous examples of pupils' work in their English and mathematics books from the last and this academic year. I observed learning in all classes, all of which observations were with you. A thorough examination of the school's safeguarding arrangements was undertaken with you, as the school's designated lead for safeguarding, and your school business manager. I held a discussion with a group of 10 pupils and with various pupils during their lessons, hearing some read. I also reviewed the 12 responses to Ofsted's online questionnaire, Parent View, five free-text messages, and the results of a parent survey undertaken by the school. The four responses by pupils and five by staff to the respective online surveys were also considered, along with views by pupils and staff expressed to me during the inspection.

Key lines of enquiry for this inspection

- improvement since the previous inspection, including increasing pupils' progress and regular attendance
- the effectiveness of safeguarding
- how well the school teaches writing
- how effectively the new leader of the school has established key priorities
- how well governors hold leaders to account for the use of additional funding to improve the progress and attainment of disadvantaged pupils.