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Mrs Susan Herriott
Headteacher
Guildhall Feoffment Community Primary School
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Dear Mrs Herriott

Short inspection of Guildhall Feoffment Community Primary School

Following my visit to the school on 18 May 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 November 2011.

This school continues to be good.

The leadership team has maintained the good quality of education in the school since the last inspection. You have overseen a significant period of change and overcome many challenges along the way linked to the new building works, including a number of set-backs and delays. Alongside this, you and your team have put considerable thought and planning into the development of the school as it increases its intake to include Year 6 pupils by September 2016. Throughout, you have been incredibly vigilant to ensure the safety of pupils during the building works, kept the day-to-day running of the school effective and ensured that a good standard of education is sustained for all the pupils.

There is a caring and nurturing ethos at Guildhall Feoffment Primary School, where pupils' progress and welfare are equally important to the staff. Pupils are very proud of their school. They believe that the school is 'amazing', 'brilliant' and 'fantastic' as it offers them a 'huge amount of opportunities'. They say that their school 'stands out from others'. Older pupils view themselves as role models to those who are younger. They take on additional responsibilities, putting themselves forward to be voted in as house captains and volunteering to carry out whole-school jobs. Pupils like the thought that the teachers 'treat them like grown-ups. It makes us feel independent, trusted and helpful.' This results in developing pupils' self-esteem and confidence in what they can achieve.

Pupils are enthusiastic about their learning. They talk about the curriculum being enjoyable and offering them lots of 'opportunities' to visit different places. These include going on residential trips, which pupils say teaches them 'to get on with others and work as a team'. A large number of pupils join in the many clubs that the school provides. As

well as sport, additional clubs encouraging pupils to develop other skills are popular. Pupils spoke enthusiastically about being part of the 'Benjamin Britten' choir. They talked with pride about the locally-born composer and said they 'feel lucky to be a part of the choir taking part in a local event celebrating his music'.

Classrooms are bright, interesting and well organised; attractive displays support learning and celebrate pupils' achievements. Pupils routinely refer to information in the classroom to help them with their learning. For example, in a Year 2 English lesson, pupils were finding definitions linked to their current topic 'growing things'. A pupil walked over to the topic board and said, 'That word is on here somewhere...I can use the words around it to help me with finding out what it means.' When asked how he knew what to do that would help him, he said 'there are lots of things on the walls we can use to help us, it's not cheating. I think that's why the teacher puts them there.'

You have successfully developed a united and highly effective staff team around you. Leaders at all levels are ambitious for pupils and work well within a supportive team approach, sharing ideas and planning together. This leads to a mutual accountability for what everyone needs to do to make sure the school continues to flourish. Consequently, pupils are making good progress.

You and other leaders also make an important contribution to support neighbouring schools. For example, you are working closely with headteachers and the local authority to ensure that the school re-organisation across the area is a positive experience for the pupils and families. Additionally, the leader of the early years supports others in her role as a specialist leader of education and carries out moderation in other schools.

Your provision in the early years provides children with a strong start to their education. Not only is the leader a skilful teacher, she is incredibly aspirational and creative in how she ensures that children's needs are fully met. All other adults in the provision are very capable of building on this expert planning to ensure that they maximise children's development. Consequently, children make good progress in the early years and are well prepared for Year 1.

Pupils succeed at this school, year on year. The work of all leaders and staff has improved reading and writing across the school. Mathematics, while effective, is not as strong as reading and writing, but leaders are improving this provision rapidly. Pupils at the end of Year 1 do very well in their phonics check (letters and the sounds that they make). This continues so that when pupils reach the end of Year 2 they do well in reading, writing and mathematics. Current school information shows that pupils in Years 3, 4 and 5 are making good progress from their starting points.

Governors are very effective in their roles and have acted upon the areas to improve identified at the last inspection. They undertake training and regularly visit the school to ensure that they have the knowledge to help develop the school further. For example, the focus of governors on attendance has made communication with parents more user-friendly and this has resulted in improved liaison between home and school. As a result, attendance has risen significantly for all groups of pupils and it is now at least in line with the national average.

Parents receive frequent information about the progress of their children. This is better than at the time of the last inspection. You are continuously informing parents about the curriculum and the homework expectations. The website is kept up to date so that parents know what is going on in the school. Pupils and parents enjoy the regular 'working together' events that see parents coming into school for part of the day and sharing their child's classroom experience. You have rightly identified that parents, some of whom may not access the internet, need to receive more regular information, particularly, for example, about the current building works and what you are doing to ensure that it does not affect pupils' learning and curriculum.

Safeguarding is effective.

You know individual pupils and their families well. This helps you fully understand the needs of your community and accurately assess the best course of action to ensure that you provide appropriate support that makes a difference. Consequently, families feel supported by the school. In the Parent View text responses received during the inspection, parents said that 'the headteacher knows every parent and pupil by name and greets them every morning. She is always there for parents' and 'It is a brilliant school that knows its community well so we know they will always know what we need.'

Staff and governors at the school provide a high level of care and ensure that all pupils are safe and secure. Staff are appropriately trained and understand how to recognise concerns, and to record and share these through the school's referral processes. Safeguarding records are in place and are consistently adhered to. Behaviour in class and around school is good. Pupils agree with this and report that they feel safe. They commented that 'we don't have bullying here, everyone's nice. If someone is ever mean, which is not often, then adults will sort it out and it doesn't happen again.'

While you fully undertake the correct pre-employment checks and these are in place to safeguard pupils, you are aware that further improvements are required to ensure that the policies and references to documents are precise and fully reflect the current guidance. You and the governors acknowledge that there are aspects of the website that need more detail to ensure that it fully complies with statutory requirements.

Inspection findings

- Leaders know the school and have the capacity to continue to develop it further. They know the strengths and areas for improvement. They work together effectively to support and challenge the quality of teaching and learning across the school.
- The school's improvement plans focus on accurate priorities for the school. For example, leaders identify the potential disruption of expanding the school from having Reception to Year 4 classes to include Years 5 and 6. Leaders have rigorous monitoring in place to ensure that the teaching and learning remains consistently effective and current school information shows that the achievement of pupils continues to improve.
- Your leadership team is becoming more skilled in monitoring and evaluating pupils' progress through lesson observations and in checking pupils' books. From this monitoring, you identify key priorities and plan effectively for their improvement. For

- example, through effective support and staff training, improvements in reading were achieved, resulting in pupils achieving significantly above the national average.
- Governors now provide the school with a good level of support and challenge. They are very committed to the school and have a good range of skills and expertise. The chair of the governing body is working determinedly to raise the aspirations of all governors, and is taking well-planned steps to develop their strategic role. For example, governors are closely checking the current building work and match their skills and expertise well with the school priorities. Monitoring records show that members of the governing body are meeting with individual staff in organised and purposeful ways to understand the work of the school. As a result of these purposeful visits, governors know what the school needs to do to improve further.
 - The challenge to enable children to make rapid progress with their language and literacy skills in the early years is met very well. In the past, gaps between boys' and girls' achievement have been wide. However, thought and care is being taken to make sure that boys are engaged and making good progress. Teachers take every opportunity to ensure that all planned activities include reading, writing and mathematics skills. For example, most boys were drawn to the construction area during my visit, having been given the task to build a den for their bugs. This activity inspired some exciting creations. Adults cleverly intervened, joining in the excitement and encouraging the boys to capture this by writing labels so that everyone would know what they had built. The boys went on to do this independently because they were proud of what they had built and wanted to show it off.
 - More pupils in Year 1 than in most schools achieved the expected standard in the end of year phonics screening check. Leaders have placed a huge emphasis on ensuring that phonics and reading are taught well. This work starts strongly in the early years, where it helps children to develop a firm foundation on which to build their reading and writing skills. Teachers and support staff use their good knowledge to lead group work with confidence. Staff also use every opportunity to help children practise their skills. For example, a child at the art easel had completed her picture. A teaching assistant spent time with the child, going through the letters and sounds for her to write her name accurately. This skilful support helped the child apply her phonics knowledge accurately. The school's records and inspection evidence confirm a higher proportion than previously are on track to reach a good level of development by the end of this academic year. This represents good progress from the children's varying starting points.
 - Pupils' progress in mathematics is improving. They are developing fluency in number because teachers are precisely planning activities that encourage pupils to effectively develop their problem solving and reasoning skills.
 - Most-able pupils are challenged well to extend their thinking. They demonstrate an increasing expertise in number. One example of this was in a Year 5 class where most-able pupils were solving tricky fraction calculations. Some were able to use their mental arithmetic skills and were asked to explain how they achieved the answers. Others systematically used a stepped approach, effectively using their reasoning skills. The same level of skill was also seen in the other Year 5 class. The teacher expertly balanced the need to support pupils and yet give them the time to figure out the calculations for themselves.
 - Pupils who have special educational needs or disability are involved in setting their own targets, which are also shared with their parents. Pupils therefore know what

they need to do to be successful. They learn independently and are making as much progress as others in the school. The special educational needs coordinator works effectively with other schools to make sure that the monitoring she carries out is accurate.

- Disadvantaged pupils, who are supported by the pupil premium funding, do as well in reading and writing as others in the school and pupils nationally. Their achievement in mathematics has not been as strong in the past. However, this has been identified by leaders, including governors, and careful checks are now made on how the extra money is spent and how this is helping to improve the progress, particularly in mathematics, of this group of pupils. The school's current information and pupils' work in their mathematics books shows that this picture is getting better and pupils' progress is more in line with their classmates.
- Attendance has improved since the last inspection. It is now in line with the national average. This is because there is a consistent approach to following the governor-agreed attendance policy. Additionally, the attendance officer closely monitors attendance daily and the information she provides is used effectively by leaders, including governors, to offer and provide additional support to families.
- There is in-depth analysis of strengths and weaknesses in pupils' progress and achievement in relation to what is nationally expected for their age. However, this is not consistently carried out well enough in some curriculum areas. There are strengths such as in physical education, in personal, social, health and economic education and in modern foreign languages, where the pupils have the opportunity to study Latin. Topic books and displays show that the curriculum has many exciting features. However, pupils' work also illustrates that not enough time is spent on some subjects such as history, geography and art for pupils to be able to show what they can do well.
- While there is evidence to show that some pupils complete their work with pride, many do not. Not all teachers make sure that presentation expectations are consistently high enough. As a consequence, good-quality work, both in mathematics and writing, is not appropriately set out and well presented in pupils' books.

Next steps for the school

Leaders and those responsible for governance should ensure that:

- the curriculum gives pupils more opportunities to show what they can achieve in other subject areas such as history, geography and art
- teachers challenge pupils to present their work neatly and with care, applying the same high expectations that teachers have of pupils' achievement.

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

Yours sincerely

Tracy Fielding
Her Majesty's Inspector

Information about the inspection

During the inspection, I held meetings with you, the deputy headteacher, the special needs co-ordinator, and the mathematics and English leaders. I also spoke with two governors, including the chair of governing body, and met with a group of pupils. You accompanied me on visits to classes. Together we looked at pupils' work in books and while in classes, and informally spoke to pupils about their learning. I scrutinised and discussed a range of documents, including samples of pupils' work, information about pupils' achievement, the school's improvement plans and safeguarding checks, policies and procedures. We discussed your own evaluation of the school's effectiveness and I checked that the school's website is compliant with statutory requirements. I considered the views of 58 parents who sent text messages to Ofsted during the inspection, and 62 parents who completed Ofsted's online questionnaire, Parent View.