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Mrs Stewart
Cogenhoe Primary School
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Dear Mrs Stewart

Short inspection of Cogenhoe Primary School

Following my visit to the school on 15 October 2015, 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 July 2011.

This school continues to be good.

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

When you started as headteacher at the school in April 2014, you assessed the quality of teaching at the school by visiting classrooms and examining pupils' work. You concluded that there were areas of weak teaching in the school and this had slowed pupils' progress. As a result, you asked the local authority to conduct an assessment of teaching at Cogenhoe, which confirmed your judgement that teaching overall required improvement. You immediately began improvements. You made clear your high expectations for every pupil and, with supportive governors, drew up an effective action plan to address any weak teaching and to ensure that the progress of every pupil is good or better.

The improvements that have taken place have had a marked impact throughout the school. Teaching is now good overall, and is continuing to improve. You recognise that unconfirmed information shows that outcomes for 2015 for Year 6 were not as high as they should be. Though the progress that these children made in their learning improved considerably in their final year, a legacy of weak teaching in previous years resulted in slightly fewer of these pupils making good progress overall during their time in Key Stage 2, compared to the most recently published national averages. However, pupils currently in the school are making good progress and the rates of progress that pupils make are accelerating in all year groups. Almost all

pupils are now making the progress expected of them, and approximately four in ten pupils are making better than expected progress.

The school has successfully addressed the areas for improvement identified at the last inspection, when teachers did not always use assessment information to help match pupils' work to their ability, nor ensure that pupils received clear advice on how to improve their work. Teachers now assess pupils well through skilful questioning in lessons. Teachers check that pupils have understood what they are being taught and then look in pupils' books for further evidence of this. Where they note that pupils are unsure, or are making errors, they will quickly address this.

The rates of progress made by disadvantaged pupils have also improved and are accelerating. Skilled teachers and support staff support these pupils and ensure they receive high-quality provision. Almost all disadvantaged pupils in the school are now making at least the progress expected of them. You are fully aware that not enough disadvantaged pupils are making more than expected progress yet. Because of this, you are intensifying the support given to them to help them do even better. The pupils' books I examined during my visit indicate that their work is improving rapidly. However, these books also show that pupils do not always have opportunities to use and apply the new skills they have learned in mathematics, writing and reading to other areas of the curriculum.

Your determination and uncompromising drive to turn Cogenhoe into an outstanding primary school have meant that you have had to make tough decisions. A large number of new teachers have joined the school. You and the governing body have made clear that pay rises are only awarded to teachers who meet challenging improvement targets. Staff have responded positively to the much higher expectations. They are now working together and learning best practice from each other. They are proud to work in a school that is now convincingly good once again. Your deputy headteacher enthusiastically supports the changes you are making. Like you, she is highly respected by staff. She is helping them to ensure that they meet the needs of all groups of pupils when they plan and deliver lessons.

Pupils throughout the school have consistently good attitudes to learning and they work hard. They respect their teachers highly and say that lessons are exciting. Pupils wear their uniform with pride and are very supportive of each other. They told me that bullying and name-calling are extremely rare because everyone gets on so well. Where a problem occurs, pupils are confident that adults sort it out quickly.

The Chair and Vice chair of the Governing Body passionately promote the success of the school. They have sought out new members to strengthen their effectiveness. The governing body is now very effective because, as well as strongly supporting the improvements that you have made, governors are now skilled at holding you and other leaders to account for any areas that are not yet as effective as they could be. They visit the school regularly and check that the improvements that are planned are taking place and having the impact intended. You and governors have a shared and accurate view of the strengths of the school and the remaining areas of minor

weaknesses. You have put appropriate plans in place to address these, which you monitor continually and report back to governors.

Safeguarding is effective.

You have ensured that all safeguarding arrangements are fit for purpose and that pupils are kept safe. Good procedures are in place and you keep all records systematically. The school's single central register is up to date and at least one member of the governing body who has undertaken safer recruitment training is on the interview panel for all new staff. Staff check visitors are registered on arrival and supervise them while they are in school.

Staff are well trained in safeguarding, and update their training on an annual basis. There are additional regular updates for them, which cover areas such as radicalisation. You ensure that new staff are given training promptly in safeguarding. Because of this, staff are alert to the signs of potential abuse and are well aware of the school's procedures for reporting their concerns. You and the deputy headteacher, who takes leadership for safeguarding in your absence, have created a culture where all staff are observant and will not hesitate to pass on any worries they have about a child.

Pupils say the school keeps them very safe. Those I talked with during my visit were keen to tell me how any adult will help them if they are worried or unsure about anything. They also told me how the school teaches them effectively about the different dangers they may face.

Inspection findings

- The headteacher has had a significant impact since her appointment in April 2014. She has improved the quality of teaching in the school by systematically attending to any weaknesses and supporting those teachers who need advice on how to improve what they do. She has also made it clear that the school is for the benefit of pupils and, therefore, all teaching must be at least good, or better. Leaders have brought in new teachers and they monitor the work of all staff rigorously, to ensure that outcomes for all pupils are improving continually.
- The governing body is highly effective. Governors visit the school very regularly and meet with senior leaders, as well as conducting monitoring visits to check pupils' work and see learning happening. These visits focus well on particular issues and help governors to see precisely what is working and what more leaders need to do. The Chair and Vice chair have an accurate view of the school's strengths and the areas for development. They, and the governor committees, hold senior leaders to account rigorously. Leaders

welcome this, however, because they see the importance of checking that action is proving to be effective.

- Teachers give pupils advice and support and, if necessary, help them individually or in small groups. This ensures that pupils are given sufficiently challenging work, whatever their ability. Teachers give an additional 'challenge' task to those who finish quickly. These challenges make pupils think hard. Pupils say they like work that is challenging for them.
- Teachers with whom the inspector met during his visit confirm that staff are a united team who learn from, and support, each other well. Leaders have put in place consistent systems that both staff and pupils know well. For example, the system of marking, which highlights in yellow pen the errors pupils have made, is identical in all year groups. This means that all pupils know where to check their work and to look for the orange 'spot' that teachers make next to it once pupils have made a correction. As a result, teachers and support staff can move around classes and adapt quickly to different year groups. Staff were quick to tell the inspector about their pride in working at Cogenhoe and about the successes that they are achieving together.
- Pupils work hard in all year groups. They do not become unduly worried about making occasional mistakes because teachers remind them that it is a natural part of learning. In one lesson that the inspector visited, a pupil was keen to tell her classmates and her teacher that the saying 'a mistake is a present in disguise' was good because it taught everyone that something new can be learned from getting things wrong.
- Parents are supportive of the changes that the headteacher has made. Those that the inspector met with before the start of school day confirmed that her leadership is of high quality. They were unanimous in informing the inspector that the headteacher and other staff are very approachable and respond quickly to parents. Those parents who responded to Parent View were also very positive about all aspects of the school, including its leadership and the progress that children make. All parents who took part say that their child is happy at the school and feels safe there.
- Leaders track the outcomes of all pupils closely and continually. Results for last year's cohort of Year 6 were lower due to several years of weaker teaching which could not be fully addressed in their final year at the school. However, progress rates were still close to national averages for pupils overall. From attainment on entry levels at Reception that are broadly typical, children make good progress from when they arrive. A higher proportion leave Reception with a good level of development than that found nationally. A higher proportion of pupils also pass the phonics screening check (the sounds that letters represent) in Year 1, and the school has set an ambitious

target of 90% for this year's cohort. Results of Key Stage 1 are consistently above the national average.

- Progress through Key Stage 2 is now good in all year groups, with pupils making at least the progress expected of them, and approximately four in ten making greater than expected progress. The progress for disadvantaged pupils has also increased considerably. Though not enough pupils are making more than expected progress yet, the school is addressing this and there are recent signs of accelerating improvement in pupils' books. However, disadvantaged pupils are not always getting the opportunity to use and apply the things they have learned in mathematics and English in other areas of the curriculum. This means that their progress overall is not yet as fast as it could be.
- Work the inspector saw on his visit confirms school leaders' views that pupils' progress is at least good, and in many cases it is rapid. Pupils complete their work neatly and show a pride in what they do. Pupils are writing with increasing complexity and showing considerable creativity in English lessons. For example, one pupil wrote, 'So silent, so silent, the children start their day. One blood red moon beamed across the isolated village; Hallowe'en had arrived.' However, the standard of writing is not as good in other subjects, such as science, because pupils do not get sufficient opportunity to do extended pieces of work in these areas.
- In the 2013–2014 school year, pupils who are disabled or who have special educational needs had a rate of absence that was higher than the national figure. However, this has now reduced and attendance is close to the national average. Leaders track all absence rates closely and meet immediately with those parents whose child's attendance has fallen. As a result, attendance for pupils across the school is now above average and rising.
- Safeguarding is effective because staff are vigilant in their approach and report their concerns appropriately. They have been well trained and know the signs of potential abuse of children. All necessary systems are in place, and leaders keep records locked away and up to date. The designated leader for safeguarding, who is the headteacher, makes prompt referrals to external agencies and does not shy away from contacting these agencies immediately if their response has been insufficient.

Next steps for the school

Leaders and governors should ensure that:

- all pupils' skills in writing improves in subjects other than English

- the proportion of disadvantaged pupils making more than expected progress in English and mathematics increases by giving those pupils the opportunities to use and apply what they have learned to all areas of the curriculum.

I am copying this letter to the Chair of the Governing Body and the Director of Children's Services for Northamptonshire. This letter will be published on the Ofsted website.

Yours sincerely

Roary Pownall

Her Majesty's Inspector

Information about the inspection

During the inspection, I met you, the deputy headteacher, members of your senior leadership team, those who have responsibility for leading the teaching of English and mathematics, the leader of the early years, other teachers in the school and both the Chair and the Vice chair of the Governing Body. I reviewed your school's self-evaluation document and your current school improvement plans and discussed these with you. We visited classrooms and learning areas across the school to observe teaching and to look at pupils' work. I evaluated your recent information about pupils' progress and examined attendance records, behaviour logs and minutes of meetings of the Governing Body. I observed, and talked with, pupils at breaktime and met with others at lunchtime. I reviewed samples of documentation for, and referrals made in respect of, safeguarding and met with the designated lead teacher for this area. I examined anonymised details from performance management documentation. I undertook a scrutiny of work from a sample of pupils from different year groups in the school. I met with a number of parents at the beginning of the school day and considered their views alongside responses from both Parent View and your school's own questionnaire for parents.