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Miss Linda Taylor
Executive Headteacher
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Dear Miss Taylor

Short inspection of Preston Primary School

Following my visit to the school on 22 May 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 July 2013.

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 worked effectively with your head of school to improve very many aspects of the school's provision since you joined as executive headteacher in September 2013.

You have helped the school to grow and thrive since becoming part of the federation with Wingham Primary School. Governors describe your leadership as inspirational. Staff completely trust in what you are trying to achieve and support your improvements with enthusiasm. They can see how well the opportunities afforded to pupils are preparing them for the future. Parents are overwhelmingly supportive of the school. Every single parent who completed the online survey, Parent View, would recommend Preston Primary to other parents. One parent wrote, 'There is a strong sense of community and belonging here.'

As the federation has blossomed, you have become more strategic in your leadership. This, in turn, has helped the head of school and the inclusion manager to develop and flourish in their respective leadership roles.

The curriculum is unique and built around the needs of the pupils who attend the school. It celebrates the community within which the school sits and offers pupils a window into the wider world and the opportunity to develop their knowledge, skills

and understanding in all subjects. Right from the youngest children in Reception upwards, pupils are confident and enjoy success in all areas of school life. They say that the school is a safe place and there is no bullying. One girl reported that when anyone does fall out it is normally because 'they haven't had enough sleep!'

The head of school evaluates the quality of teaching accurately. She knows that the high-quality provision that pupils have received has allowed them to achieve well at key points. For example, outcomes in the Year 1 phonics screening check have been very high in recent years. Attainment and progress are improving in key stages 1 and 2. Disadvantaged pupils often make better progress than other pupils nationally. In fact the progress that pupils made in mathematics in key stage 2 in 2017 was significantly higher than that found nationally. Nevertheless, leaders know that this is not yet replicated in English and mathematics for all current pupils. Leaders also know that there are times when teachers could do more to challenge the most able pupils.

The federation was formed a few months after the previous inspection. You, your governors and the local authority all report that the school was not as strong as may have been expected at the time. There were changes to staffing and although headline outcomes were acceptable, there was much to do to consolidate good teaching across the school. Nonetheless, you have implemented the recommendations from that inspection. You have ensured that the school's assessment and marking policy is applied consistently, and have provided opportunities for teachers to observe good practice within the federation and beyond.

Safeguarding is effective.

The leadership team has ensured that all safeguarding arrangements are fit for purpose. Leaders know the school and the community well and this allows them to spot when things are not as they should be.

When the school joined the federation, improvements were made to the safety of the site and recruitment procedures were double-checked. Required checks on federation governors were also completed.

Staff and governors are well trained in safeguarding pupils and know the key factors that may put them at risk. They are especially vigilant regarding pupils' appropriate use of online technology, both in and out of school. Pupils feel comfortable and confident about reporting inappropriate material to staff.

Inspection findings

- During this inspection we agreed to focus on: the progress of current pupils in mathematics; how reading contributes to deepening knowledge in the wider curriculum; the identification and progress of pupils who have special educational needs (SEN) and/or disabilities; and the impact of governors and leaders working across the federation.

- Expectations in mathematics across the school have risen. The use of practical equipment is helping pupils to better understand the mathematics they are doing. As a result, pupils are improving their mathematical fluency across the school and becoming more confident in their use of number.
- The school-wide approach to frequently teach problem-solving and reasoning is having the greatest impact in upper key stage 2. In classes where this approach is used less frequently, the extra layer of difficulty sometimes leads to errors in calculation. School assessment information shows that pupils are keeping pace with national expectations, but progress is not accelerating to allow the most able to reach the higher standards.
- The curriculum is a real strength of the school. It meets the needs of pupils extremely well, and engages them in a range of fun and exciting learning tasks. The pupils I spoke to found it very difficult to think of anything they would want to improve about what they learn and do at school. Visits, trips and visiting speakers and experts are used very well to enhance learning.
- Topics fit together extremely well to help pupils develop their knowledge, skills and understanding across a range of subjects. Leaders have usefully embarked on a project to plot the progression of skills more carefully in each subject area.
- Assessment of the wider curriculum is innovative. Pupils explain and describe the skills they have learned and used during a topic by completing a practical problem-solving task.
- Opportunities to read and write in other areas of the curriculum are plentiful. However, sometimes teachers do not explain tasks clearly enough. Some pupils take less care when writing in topic work, and make simple errors with grammar and punctuation. This can slow pupils' progress.
- Many pupils who join the school late have SEN and/or disabilities. Parents choose the school for their children because they know they will get high-quality support for their additional needs. This inward mobility causes some older year groups to have a high proportion of pupils who have SEN and/or disabilities.
- The inclusion manager has a clear overview of the additional provision and a robust approach to checking the impact it has. Pupils who have SEN and/or disabilities are well supported in class by a dedicated team of additional adults.
- Pupils who have SEN and/or disabilities make roughly the same progress as all other pupils nationally. However, they do not routinely make accelerated progress in catching up if they have fallen behind.
- Leaders work together exceptionally well across the school and the federation, and are well regarded by staff, parents and pupils alike. They have an accurate understanding of the strengths of the school. Staff appreciate leaders' efforts to reduce unnecessary tasks in their workloads.
- Strong governance holds leaders to account and sets the strategic direction of the school. Governors are fully informed about the school's work because of their regular visits and astute questioning in meetings. In addition to celebrating the many improvements, especially around the curriculum, they constantly ask what more can be achieved.

Next steps for the school

Leaders and those responsible for governance should ensure that:

- they continue to improve teaching so that all groups of pupils, including the most able, make rapid progress in reading, writing and mathematics.

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

Yours sincerely

Lee Selby
Her Majesty's Inspector

Information about the inspection

I met with you and the head of school throughout the day. We had extended meetings to talk about self-evaluation and safeguarding. I visited every class with the head of school to observe learning, look at pupils' books and talk to pupils about their work. I held meetings with the inclusion manager and another teacher. I also met with a group of pupils from Years 4 and 5. I met with three members of the federation's governing body, including the chair. I held a telephone conversation with a local authority improvement adviser. I looked at a range of school documents, including information related to safeguarding, teaching and learning, pupils' progress, provision for pupils who have SEN and/or disabilities and governance. I considered 18 responses to the confidential staff questionnaire and 73 responses to Ofsted's online survey, Parent View. I also considered a letter from a parent.