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Mrs Emma Law
Headteacher
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Dear Mrs Law

Short inspection of East Stour Primary School

Following my visit to the school on 23 May 2019, 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 2015.

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 senior leaders to improve many aspects of the school's provision since you joined as headteacher in January 2017. Your strong commitment to ensuring that every child who attends East Stour is loved promotes an inclusive culture where all pupils feel valued. Staff, governors and parents trust in what you are trying to achieve and support your improvements with enthusiasm.

The school has improved since the last inspection because you and senior leaders use your accurate understanding of the strengths and weaknesses of the school to prioritise actions to take. For example, effective action has been taken to improve pupils' behaviour. As a result, the majority of pupils behave well and are ready to learn.

The reorganisation of staffing has enabled leaders to implement a wide range of changes to secure improvement. Many middle leaders are new to their roles. They welcome the support they are receiving from senior leaders to develop their leadership skills. This is enabling them to become more adept at making sure that the actions they take empower all pupils to make greater progress.

A large majority of parents are very supportive of the school. Parents of children with special educational needs and/or disabilities (SEND) or who speak English as an additional language talk positively about the support their children receive. One

parent commented, 'There has been a big increase in SEN support with the provision of an assistant SENCo and SENCo admin support. This has made significant improvements for children with SEN.' However, a few parents feel their children are not well looked after.

You have a strong vision for the curriculum which is shared and understood by staff. As a result, the curriculum is built around the needs of the pupils who attend the school. It enables them to learn in a practical way, offering them a window into the wider world along with the opportunity to develop their knowledge, skills and understanding in all subjects. Consequently, pupils feel that lessons are relevant to them. Therefore, they love coming to school.

You evaluate the quality of teaching accurately. You know that the high-quality provision pupils receive has allowed them to achieve well at key points. Attainment and progress are improving in the early years foundation stage (EYFS), key stage 1, and particularly in mathematics in key stage 2. Disadvantaged pupils are beginning to make greater progress. Nevertheless, you know that this is not yet replicated in English, especially in writing. You also know that there are times when teachers could do more to challenge the most able pupils.

Safeguarding is effective.

Leaders have ensured that a culture of safeguarding permeates the school and that all safeguarding arrangements are fit for purpose. Leaders know the pupils, their families and the community well. This allows them to spot when things are not as they should be. Detailed, high-quality records show that concerns are followed up rapidly. Leaders work well with other agencies to help pupils and families receive the support they need.

Inspection findings

- School leaders are justifiably proud of the improvements they have led since the last inspection. The high level of monitoring checks that changes are leading to the improvements required. Where actions do not have the desired effect, leaders are not afraid to alter their approach. For example, leaders have tried different ways to support children to improve their spelling and know that there is still more to do.
- You have rightly focused on improving pupils' spelling and writing. Actions such as giving pupils plenty of opportunities to practise their writing for different purposes have led to pupils in the EYFS and key stage 1 progressing well. Pupils in key stage 2 are beginning to make greater progress in writing, although this is stronger in some classes than in others.
- Pupils are given regular opportunities to use equipment to support them with their mathematics. This helps them to develop their fluency and understanding. They are able to use their mathematical skills to solve problems and explain their answers. As a result, pupils make secure progress in mathematics.

- In the EYFS children are highly engaged in learning due to the wide range of exciting and purposeful activities available to them. For example, children enjoyed exploring the outdoor construction area set up to replicate a building site. Adults are skilful in their interactions with children. This encourages the children to persevere with tasks. As a result, children develop their skills across all areas of learning.
- Staff are relentless in their determination to secure improvements in pupils' behaviour while promoting an inclusive culture. Pupils are polite and respectful, being supportive of each other, and engage well with adults. They feel valued and report that adults respond quickly to any instances of unkind behaviour.
- The curriculum meets the needs of pupils extremely well and engages them in fun and exciting activities. The wide range of additional activities which make up the East Stour bucket list are used very well to enhance pupils' experiences and their learning.
- Topics fit together well to help pupils develop their knowledge, skills and understanding across a range of subjects. Art is a particular strength across the school. For example, pupils in Year 5 were enthused by the topic focusing on Japan. They were inspired to produce their own art work from the illustration on the cover of the text they were reading.
- The curriculum has been broadened to include a greater focus on equality and diversity. Consequently, pupils are developing tolerance and understanding. This prepares them well for life in modern Britain.
- In lessons where pupils learn through practical experiences they are highly engaged. They talk passionately about their learning. Pupils use the stimulating classroom displays to help them to remember what they have learned in previous lessons. They are able to make links across different areas of the curriculum. For example, pupils in Year 4 had used their mathematical and geographical skills to explore Viking settlements. However, some inconsistency exists across the school which means not all pupils receive the same high-quality teaching. Therefore, they make less progress than their peers.
- Leaders and governors know that attendance needs to improve. Leaders take a wide range of actions to engage pupils and parents. As a result, many pupils now attend school more regularly and promptly. However, despite the school's best efforts, too many pupils are frequently absent.
- The governing body has recently undergone changes in membership. As a result, many governors are new to the role. Governors visit the school regularly. They challenge leaders effectively about the finance of the school. However, governors do not apply the same level of challenge to all aspects of the school's work.

Next steps for the school

Leaders and those responsible for governance should ensure that they:

- continue to improve the quality of teaching so that all pupils, including the most able, make better progress in writing

- embed their vision for the curriculum across all classes so that all pupils receive the highest quality learning experiences
- further strengthen the skills of all leaders and governors so that they know how to check that actions taken to improve provision enable pupils to make strong progress.

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

Linda Taylor
Ofsted Inspector

Information about the inspection

I met with you, the two deputy headteachers and the school's special educational needs coordinator throughout the day. We had extended meetings to talk about self-evaluation and safeguarding. I visited the EYFS and classes in Years 1, 3, 4 and 6 with either you or the deputy headteacher to observe learning, look at pupils' books and talk to pupils about their work. I looked at some of the pupils' work with you and senior leaders. I talked to pupils during lunchtime and spoke to midday supervisors. I met with three members of the governing body including the chair, a group of middle leaders and the local authority improvement adviser. I scrutinised a range of school documents including information related to safeguarding, behaviour, attendance, teaching and learning, self-evaluation and minutes of meetings. I took careful account of 37 responses from Ofsted's online questionnaire, Parent View, along with 20 free-text comments and I had conversations with parents. I considered 26 responses to the confidential staff questionnaire and 12 responses to the pupil questionnaire, as well as a letter from a member of staff.