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Mrs Catherine Higley
Headteacher
East-the-Water Community Primary School
Mines Road
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Dear Mrs Higley

Short inspection of East-the-Water Community Primary School

Following my visit to the school on 5 December 2017 with Andrew Brown, Ofsted Inspector, 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 February 2013.

This school continues to be good.

The leadership team has maintained the good quality of education in the school since the last inspection. As pupil numbers have increased, you and your governors have successfully communicated your determination to continue to improve the quality of education the school provides. You have the confidence of staff, pupils and parents, and have established an open, caring and inclusive school community where everyone is valued. Staff morale is high, and there is a strong team approach to school improvement. Governors are knowledgeable, informed and aspirational for staff, pupils, the school and the wider community. You and your leadership team have established a culture of high expectations for all. You have promoted the school's links to Plymouth University and the North Devon Teaching School Alliance that enable staff to engage in high-quality training and research projects. These activities have strengthened leadership, improved teaching and ensure that pupils achieve well.

You and your leadership team are clear about what is going well and what needs to be improved further. Together, you, the wider leadership team and governors are tenacious in checking that actions taken are making a positive difference to pupils' academic and personal development.

'School is fun' was the view expressed by one pupil who summed up the comments expressed by many. Pupils enjoy being at school. Your emphasis on cultivating their personal and social skills, together with effective learning habits, ensures that they are well equipped to deal with any challenges they may face. Pupils are helped to

recognise their emotions and feelings, and to understand how these can impact on their behaviour and ability to learn well. This approach ensures that, typically, pupils' behaviour is exemplary and they take good care of each other. During lessons, they are keen to work together to share ideas and find solutions to the challenges they are set. Parents recognise and value the inclusive culture of the school and the good quality of education it provides. They are confident that their children are happy and very well cared for at school.

The areas for improvement raised at the previous inspection have been successfully addressed. By Year 6, pupils' work, including that of the most able pupils, shows that they confidently transfer writing skills learned in English lessons to their written work in other subjects. For example, they write lists, reports and instructions in geography, history and science. Opportunities are provided for pupils to engage in specific projects, such as writing the script for the 'welcome film' shown in the school's entrance area and producing the school newspaper. This type of activity provides a real-life context for writing and so gives it relevance for pupils. The feedback pupils receive about their work makes it clear what they have done well. They are challenged to make specific small-step improvements that will move their learning forwards quickly. Pupils' responses illustrate their keenness to improve. Together, these actions have lifted the standard of pupils' writing, particularly in Years 3 to 6.

Safeguarding is effective.

Leaders and governors have ensured that all safeguarding arrangements are fit for purpose. Records are detailed and of high quality. Regular training ensures that staff are up to date with the most recent legislation. All those in the school community are vigilant, and highly committed to pupils' welfare and to keeping them safe. Staff are very clear about what to do if they have a concern about a pupil. You work closely with other professionals and work hard to develop trusting relationships with parents.

The strong emphasis you place on pupils' personal development ensures that they develop the skills they need to keep themselves safe, including when using modern technologies. Pupils report that they feel safe at school and would happily seek the support and guidance of an adult if they had any worries or concerns. Parents are confident that their children are safe at school. The work of the pastoral team is much appreciated. Parents often turn to the school first for help when they are facing challenging circumstances in their lives. You actively seek specialist support to find solutions for pupils and their families. You are resolute in promoting good attendance and in checking where pupils are when not at school. Pupils' excellent behaviour, and the positive way in which they work and play together, reflect the confidence they have that they are safe and looked after very well at school.

Inspection findings

- The proportion of pupils achieving a good level of development by the end of their Reception Year, and the proportion achieving the expected or greater

depth standard in reading, writing and mathematics by the end of Year 2, have been below average for a number of years. We agreed to explore the reasons for this and to check if actions taken this year are making a positive difference.

- You have supported leaders to conduct a very thorough analysis of the strengths and weaknesses in pupils' knowledge, understanding and skills in the early years and key stage 1. The outcome of this analysis has been to give greater importance to developing pupils' communication and language skills as early as possible. This includes improving their skills in speaking and listening, and broadening the vocabulary they understand, and can use, when talking to others and in their writing. There is an increased focus on developing pupils' early reading and writing skills, including phonics. The use of practical equipment and encouraging pupils to talk when engaged in mathematics activities have been emphasised. This is helping them to understand numbers and to work confidently when completing calculations and solving problems.
- Regular, accurate assessments are made to establish pupils' starting points and to check on the progress they are making. Teachers and teaching assistants use this information well to guide the planning of activities and to identify pupils needing additional support. Typically, pupils make good progress from what are often low starting points on entry to the school. Faster progress is evident for many pupils this year but not enough time has elapsed for the extent of the improvement to be fully realised. You have, however, been able to raise expectations and set higher 2018 end of year targets for Reception and Year 2 based on the successes already achieved.
- Next, we looked at what is being done to improve pupils' phonics knowledge so that more meet the expected standard at the end of Years 1 and 2. Extensive training for teachers and teaching assistants has ensured that phonics sessions are effective. Pupils' progress is improving as a result. The decision to focus more on teaching phonics in the early years has ensured that pupils are better prepared for the demands of Year 1. Year 2 pupils who did not meet the standard when in Year 1 are catching up. Links between phonics sessions and reading and writing give pupils context for, and the opportunity to practise, what they have learned. Pupils' progress is meticulously checked. Current information shows that more Year 1 and Year 2 pupils are well placed this year to meet the expected standard in 2018 than in previous years.
- In 2017, an above-average proportion of pupils achieved the expected standard in reading, writing and mathematics in Year 6. The progress and attainment information did suggest, however, that there may be some differences between the performance of boys, girls and disadvantaged pupils. We explored this by looking at the school's information about pupils in Years 3 to 6. Working closely with teachers, you and your leadership team monitor pupils' progress very closely. Strengths and weaknesses in pupils' learning are identified quickly. Prompt action is taken to address any aspects needing improvement. Teachers' planning closely reflects, and is informed by, the next small steps pupils need to take to move on with their learning. The consequence of this tightly focused approach is that pupils often make rapid progress. From similar starting points, there is no significant difference in the progress made by boys, girls and disadvantaged pupils. Current Year 6 pupil information indicates that they are

well placed to achieve at least as well in 2018 as pupils in previous years.

- Finally, we agreed to identify what the school does to enable pupils who have special educational needs (SEN) and/or disabilities to achieve well at the school. The special educational needs coordinator (SENCo) is very knowledgeable. She works closely with parents and outside agencies to ensure that pupils are very well supported. Assessment procedures are extremely thorough and allow a close check to be kept on pupils' progress. The SENCo, teachers and teaching assistants have an in-depth understanding of pupils' specific difficulties. Focused packages of support for those pupils who have the greatest need enable them to engage in whole-class activities at a level that is appropriate for them. Extensive training ensures that staff are well placed to provide high-quality, often bespoke support for pupils who have a range of SEN and/or disabilities. As a result, pupils make good progress with many reaching the expected standard in reading, writing and mathematics by the end of Year 6.

Next steps for the school

Leaders and those responsible for governance should ensure that more pupils:

- achieve a good level of development by the end of their Reception Year
- meet the expected standard in phonics in Years 1 and 2
- achieve the expected standard in reading, writing and mathematics by the end of Year 2
- achieve the greater depth standard in reading, writing and mathematics by the end of Year 2.

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

Yours sincerely

Alison Cogher
Ofsted Inspector

Information about the inspection

During the inspection, we held meetings with you, your deputy, the SENCo and the early years leader. Three members of the governing body, including the chair of the governing body, met with me to discuss actions taken since the last inspection and their aspirations for the school's future. I had a telephone conversation with a representative of the local authority. We looked at a range of school documents, including those relating to safeguarding. The school's improvement plan and self-evaluation information were considered. Parents' views were gathered by speaking

to them at the start of the school day and through Ofsted's online questionnaire, Parent View. We spoke to pupils in lessons and at breaktime and lunchtime. Responses to the staff questionnaire were also taken into account. You, your deputy and the SENCO observed lessons with us. We also looked at information about pupils' progress and some pupils' written and mathematics work.