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Mrs Fiona McCallum
Headteacher
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Dear Mrs McCallum

Short inspection of Cavalry Primary School

Following my visit to the school on 13 February 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 your predecessor school was judged to be good in June 2013.

This school continues to be good.

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

Leaders, staff and governors share a strong moral purpose and ensure that the school's inclusive ethos is put into practice. Leaders identify that a significant number of pupils have substantial barriers to learning, including pupils with special educational needs and/or disabilities (SEND). However, leaders, staff and governors are dedicated to providing what is needed for all pupils to overcome any barriers and consequently succeed. Pupils are given the opportunity to thrive within a positive and nurturing environment. Pupils are taught that everyone should be valued and respected. They told me, 'Our school is very friendly and everyone is welcome here.' As a result, pupils develop good attitudes that prepare them well for life in modern Britain.

Since the previous inspection of the predecessor school, Cavalry Primary has become an academy. In March 2017, the school joined The Elliot Foundation Academies Trust (TEFAT). Trust leaders and governors have an accurate understanding of the school's strengths and weaknesses. They use this knowledge to make sure that leaders and staff receive appropriate support and guidance. Nevertheless, they insist that improvements take place quickly, so that staff meet the high expectations held for all pupils.

Children get off to a good start in the early years classes. They make good progress because of the stimulating learning environment and well-chosen activities that help

them quickly develop their skills, particularly in reading, writing and number. Throughout their time at school, pupils appreciate their teachers and teaching assistants, whom they describe as 'kind and helpful'. Pupils are well mannered and friendly. Pupils' behaviour in lessons and around the school is of a high standard, and their attitudes to learning are consistently good. Pupils listen well to teachers' instructions and explanations and settle quickly to their work. Attendance has improved and is now in line with the national average. Most pupils attend school regularly and the number of pupils who miss school frequently has decreased.

There is much for pupils to look forward to at the school. The curriculum is enhanced with visits, residential trips, visiting speakers and special events. Pupils told me, 'We learn a lot because our teachers are good at explaining lots of different things.' Pupils enjoy the many experiences they are given, particularly in art, music and physical education (PE). Pupils proudly told me that the school's concert band club, made up of pupils and staff, had performed at the town's summer festival last year. Pupils benefit from a varied programme of extra-curricular clubs, ranging from art and dance to Spanish and tag-rugby. The school very effectively promotes pupils' physical health and fitness, and the range of sports to which pupils have access is a strength of the school.

The vast majority of parents and carers are pleased with the school. Many who provided responses to Ofsted's online questionnaire, Parent View, spoke about the friendly, approachable staff and the good progress their children make. Parents appreciate the broad and engaging curriculum that the school provides for their children. One parent reflected the views of many by stating: 'The school offers a great variety of after-school clubs which are fantastically run by enthusiastic staff. Learning at the school is fun and interactive. It's a pleasure taking my children to Cavalry School each day and seeing so many happy faces; pupils, staff and parents!'

An area for improvement highlighted in the previous inspection was to ensure that pupils make strong progress in mathematics. Leaders have attended to this area by providing training for staff and strengthening the mathematics curriculum. As a result, staff have higher expectations of what pupils should achieve in mathematics and there is a more consistent teaching approach in place across the school. Pupils successfully develop their reasoning and problem-solving skills in all year groups.

Leaders and governors undertake regular checks on the school's provision. They know what the school does well and have a realistic view of the aspects needing to improve. Consequently, there were no surprises about the areas I identified for further improvement during this inspection. The school's accurate evaluation and sharp action plans show clearly how leaders are already addressing the weaker elements of the school's work. Leaders do not focus on quick fixes. They are determined to secure sustainable improvement to ensure the best possible outcomes for pupils' long-term personal and academic achievement.

In both 2017 and 2018, published assessment information shows that pupils' outcomes at the end of key stage 1 and key stage 2 were mixed compared with national averages. Assessment information provided by the school, and supported

by work seen in pupils' books, shows that standards are rising rapidly in reading, writing and mathematics throughout the school. Current pupils are making stronger progress than previously. The staff team is working effectively together to strengthen teaching and learning. Leaders know that there is still more work to be done to ensure that the effective teaching approaches in reading, writing and mathematics are firmly fixed across the school so that pupils' progress and attainment, especially those of disadvantaged pupils, continue to improve.

Safeguarding is effective.

The leadership team has ensured that all safeguarding arrangements are fit for purpose. Staff recognise and embrace their responsibilities to ensure the safety and well-being of pupils. They have received up-to-date training, including in areas of recent national concern such as radicalisation and county lines. Leaders have established clear systems that enable staff to raise concerns and share important information to keep pupils safe. This enables referrals to external agencies to be made quickly and efficiently.

Leaders have put in place thorough procedures for vetting new staff when they join the school. Appropriate checks are made on all adults who work at Cavalry Primary, including volunteers.

Governors and the trust regularly check to ensure that safeguarding arrangements are rigorous and that everyone understands them. Pupils say that they feel well cared for and looked after in school, and parents agree.

Inspection findings

- At our initial meeting, we agreed the lines of enquiry to explore so that I could be satisfied that the school remains good. First, I considered how effectively phonics is taught, and if pupils make good enough progress in this area from their starting points. Published assessment information shows that although the proportion of pupils reaching the expected standard in the Year 1 phonics screening check has been increasing year after year, results remain below the national average.
- Effective steps have been taken by leaders to strengthen phonics provision. Training for teachers and teaching assistants has successfully raised expectations. Pupils' progress in phonics is closely checked and targeted support quickly put in place to address any underachievement. This successfully improves pupils' outcomes.
- The phonics lessons we observed together were interactive and fun, so pupils were interested and enjoying their learning. I saw children in Reception using their phonics skills successfully to label items in the 'tea shop'. When I heard a group of pupils read their books, they were able to use and apply their skills to identify sounds when reading different words. As a result, pupils' attainment in phonics continues to rise.
- Another line of enquiry focused on how leaders ensure that pupils achieve well in

writing across the school. Published assessment information and the school's own records show that over the last two years, compared with national results, pupils did not achieve as well in writing as they did in reading and mathematics.

- Leaders have already identified improving pupils' achievement in writing as a whole-school focus and have made rapid, effective changes in this area. Your chosen approach to develop pupils' vocabulary and sentence construction is working. In the lessons I observed, staff were using high-quality texts to demonstrate how to use and apply words such as 'ambush' and 'tenacious'. This effective teaching enabled pupils to go on to use these words accurately in their own written work. Across key stage 1 and key stage 2, there is a regular focus on developing the skills of handwriting, spelling, grammar and punctuation. Pupils are using these skills well in their independent writing.
- As a result of these actions, work in pupils' books, displays around the school and the school's assessment information show that most pupils are now making better progress in writing. However, there is some unevenness in the teaching of writing across the school for leaders to resolve.
- Finally, I looked at how leaders use the pupil premium funding to ensure the best outcomes for disadvantaged pupils. Leaders, including governors, view the achievement and well-being of disadvantaged pupils in the school as a high priority. They hold teachers to account for the progress that disadvantaged pupils make.
- Leaders, led by the deputy headteacher, identify any barriers to learning quickly and effectively. Funding is used to organise personalised extra help in lessons according to each pupil's individual needs. Leaders also ensure that disadvantaged pupils access a wide range of activities such as trips and after-school clubs to broaden their experiences and build their self-esteem.
- Leaders regularly monitor the progress that disadvantaged pupils make so that any gaps in learning are swiftly addressed. Leaders are equally tenacious in monitoring the attendance of disadvantaged pupils to ensure that no learning time is lost. One effective feature is the trusting relationship established between parents and the school to work together to raise the achievement of disadvantaged pupils.
- Observations in lessons, work in books and the school's assessment information demonstrate that most disadvantaged pupils make good progress from their different starting points. However, this is not yet consistent in reading, writing and mathematics, or across all year groups.

Next steps for the school

Leaders and those responsible for governance should ensure that they:

- firmly establish the recently introduced teaching approaches to improve the progress pupils make in writing across the school
- increase the proportion of disadvantaged pupils that reach the expected standards in reading, writing and mathematics in key stage 1 and key stage 2.

I am copying this letter to the chair of the local governing body, the chief executive officer of the multi-academy trust, the regional schools commissioner and the director of children's services for Cambridgeshire. This letter will be published on the Ofsted website.

Yours sincerely

Fiona Webb
Her Majesty's Inspector

Information about the inspection

You and I visited all classes across the school together. I observed teaching and learning, looked at pupils' work and spoke informally with pupils. I met with you and your deputy headteacher to discuss progress since the previous inspection. We also discussed outcomes for pupils and the impact of decisions leaders have made. I met with the leaders for English and mathematics, and the administrative assistant. I also held meetings with the chair of the local governing body and representatives from the trust, including the chief executive officer (CEO), to discuss their work with the school. I spoke with a group of pupils more formally to talk about their school experience.

Additionally, I scrutinised a variety of sources of information, including: the school's improvement plans; leaders' evaluation of the school's effectiveness; minutes of local governing body meetings; the school's assessment information for all year groups; and reports from external consultants. I also looked at the school's safeguarding and child protection procedures, the records of checks leaders make on the suitability of staff to work with children, and information relating to attendance. A discussion was held with you and one of your assistant headteachers, as two of the school's designated safeguarding leads. Furthermore, I took into account the 57 responses to Ofsted's online questionnaire, Parent View, and the 57 free-text responses from parents. I also analysed the 122 responses to Ofsted's pupil survey, and the 50 responses to Ofsted's staff survey.