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Miss Nicky Sutton and Miss Liz Brear  
Co-headteachers  
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Dear Miss Sutton and Miss Brear

### **Short inspection of Earl Spencer Primary School**

Following my visit to the school on 6 March 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 November 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 both took up the co-headship of the school in September 2018, having been assistant headteachers at the school. Since your appointment, you have restructured the leadership team and clarified the roles and responsibilities of staff across the school. Your evaluation of the school's strengths and areas for development is accurate and is reflected in your school development plan. The pupil premium strategy is detailed and the evaluation of last year's spend is accurate.

A high proportion of pupils do not speak English as their first language. More than 25 languages are common in the communities that your pupils come from. You use a range of strategies to ensure that communication with parents, carers and pupils is effective. Many staff are multilingual and can communicate with parents and pupils in their first language. Your 'young translators' group of pupils supports pupils new to the school who speak little or no English. You ensure that pupils rapidly learn English language skills so that they can understand and take part in lessons and other activities in school.

We began the day by visiting classrooms. You have aimed to achieve consistent teaching approaches across the school, and this was evident in each of the rooms we visited. Prominent displays include the school's and British values, as well as examples of pupils' written work, celebrating high standards.

Newsletters are published online and provide parents with regular updates and information. You introduced me to one of the multilingual staff who meet with parents at the start of the day. These staff answer any questions parents have about the letters.

Pupils' work is celebrated across the school, including their work in science and history. There are many displays of extended writing. You make a wide range of additional activities available to pupils. For example, pupils take part in gymnastics, karate and other sports. In addition, they learn to play chess and chess sets are available to use both inside and outside at breaktimes. You have just set up a sports council so that you can respond quickly to pupils' interests.

The school council is made up of two pupils from each class, voted for by their classmates. They play an important role in the school and are proud of the contribution they make. One member of the council explained that you acted quickly and effectively in response to a matter that was raised. Pupils value the education they receive at Earl Spencer Primary School. The majority of those I spoke with and those who responded to Ofsted's pupil survey said that they enjoyed coming to school. One pupil said, 'Teachers are all welcoming and nice – they inspire you to push to your limits.' Another said, 'School feels like our home – we will be sad to leave.'

Throughout the inspection, pupils were polite and considerate of each other and adults. At lunchtime, they played very well together and made full use of all the available equipment.

Governors know the school's strengths and areas for development. They have a well-organised programme of visits that link to the school's development plan.

You have ensured that all pupils are challenged to improve their work. For instance, I observed a teacher working with a small group of the most able pupils, tightly focused on refining key elements of their writing. They received accurate and rapid feedback and were thoroughly engrossed in the task. You have also ensured that spelling and handwriting have improved following the recommendations of the last inspection. The standard of handwriting across the school is high. Teachers ensure that pupils improve their spelling. Every classroom has a space dedicated to reading. The books provided are age-appropriate and, in addition, you have ensured that a proportion of them are dual-language, matched to specific pupils' language needs. I spoke with and listened to eight pupils from across key stage 2 read. They read fluently, with understanding, and used phonics skills well to read unfamiliar words. They read from a wide range of genres and are enthusiastic about reading. Pupils have a wide range of opportunities to read, including using the well-resourced library that they make good use of.

### **Safeguarding is effective.**

There is a strong culture of safeguarding across the school. Leaders and staff are aware of relevant local safeguarding concerns and address them robustly. Staff

bring safeguarding concerns to the appropriate leaders' attention and they are acted on promptly. Leaders work well with other agencies to keep children safe.

Pupils I spoke with, and the majority who responded to the survey, said they feel safe in the school. Pupils emphasised that teachers listened to them and said they believed that any poor behaviour is dealt with effectively. Most parents and staff who responded to Ofsted's questionnaires also believe that the school keeps children safe.

You publish extensive safeguarding advice for parents on the school's website, including links to further guidance on the 'Prevent' duty strategy. In-school events on safer internet use, children's mental health and a whole-school well-being day are also promoted on the school's website.

You have acted effectively to reduce absence, using the full range of measures available. As a result, both overall absence and persistent absence have reduced. They were in line with national averages at the end of last year and are even lower so far this year.

### **Inspection findings**

- The curriculum in the Reception Year has been specifically designed to capture the imagination of the children, taking their interests into account, particularly those boys whose attainment is low. I observed boys in the Reception Year thoroughly engaged with learning. Adult support is effective, and the learning spaces are well resourced. Children with special educational needs and/or disabilities can access the curriculum because their needs are understood and met.
- Assessment in the early years foundation stage is accurate. The leader's assessments of children's abilities on entry to the Reception Year indicate that boys, particularly those who speak English as an additional language, have knowledge and skills that are lower than those that are typical for their age. The proportion of boys who attain a good level of development at the end of the early years foundation stage is well below that of girls at the school and boys nationally. Leaders' work with those nurseries that send children on to Earl Spencer Primary School has not led to a substantial reduction in these differences on entry to the Reception Year.
- Pupils in key stage 2 write extensively in English lessons and in other subjects. For example, pupils write detailed and substantial reports in their science lessons. Pupils across key stage 2 talk with each other, teachers and teaching staff about how to improve their writing. This has a marked impact on improving the quality of their work.
- You have put systems in place to monitor and evaluate pupils' progress closely. You identified the exact difficulties with grammar faced by pupils who speak English as an additional language. You introduced lessons focused on overcoming these difficulties, thus improving these pupils' progress.

- You have restructured middle leadership, including the leadership of mathematics, across the school. As a result, the strengths and areas for development in mathematics are being accurately identified. A more consistent approach to teaching mathematics is being embedded across the school.
- Too many pupils in the upper years of key stage 2 do not recall their times tables with enough fluency. Teachers do not consistently plan tasks and activities that ensure that pupils tackle problems systematically. These two weaknesses make it difficult for pupils to solve mathematical problems efficiently.

### **Next steps for the school**

Leaders and those responsible for governance should ensure that:

- the attainment of boys by the end of the early years foundation stage is at least in line with that of boys nationally by:
  - working with those nurseries who send children on to Earl Spencer Primary School to improve boys' skills in communication and language, literacy, physical development and making relationships
  - raising parents' expectations of what boys can achieve
- pupils' mathematical fluency is increased, and teachers plan learning that enables them to develop a systematic approach to solving problems.

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

Yours sincerely

Clive Worrall  
**Ofsted Inspector**

### **Information about the inspection**

During the inspection, I held meetings with you, the subject leaders for English and mathematics, the safeguarding and behaviour lead and the leader of the early years foundation stage. I also met with the chair of the governing body.

I scrutinised a range of documents, including those relating to pupils' progress, the school's improvement planning, the pupil premium strategy and attendance and safeguarding. I visited all key stages with you and observed groups of pupils in key stages 1 and 2 learning mathematics, science, reading and writing. I spoke with pupils informally in classes. I looked at work in pupils' books. I listened to eight pupils from across key stage 2 read and spoke with them about their experiences in the school. I took account of the views of 12 parents through responses to Parent

View and the school's own parent survey outcomes from November 2018. I also took account of the 27 responses to Ofsted's staff survey and 37 responses to Ofsted's pupil survey.