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Mrs Elizabeth Russell
Acting Headteacher
Redcastle Family School
St Martin's Way
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Dear Mrs Russell

Short inspection of Redcastle Family School

Following my visit to the school on 5 July 2017, 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 March 2014.

This school continues to be good.

The leadership team has maintained the good quality of education in the school since the last inspection. The school has been through a very difficult time over the past few months due to the headteacher's absence. You have worked effectively as a team to address the issues from the last inspection and to improve pupil outcomes from last year. You have rightly concentrated on improving pupils' understanding of what they are reading and this has resulted in more pupils achieving the expected standards by the end of Year 2 and Year 6. You have also improved the learning opportunities outside for Nursery and Reception children and the provision for most-able pupils.

Parents are very happy with how well their children settle at school and with the good progress they make. A few parents I spoke to from Eastern Europe and Portugal are particularly pleased with how quickly their children learn English. 'It's brilliant,' said one Romanian parent with expert translation by her daughter.

Pupils told me they enjoy coming to school every day. One pupil said: 'It's really cool and fun. We have good teachers and they give me the right level of challenge with my work – not too hard and not too easy.' Another pupil talked about having lots of friends: 'I like that there's no bullies here; if there were, they'd be dealt with by the teachers.' One pupil who arrived from Portugal just over a year ago with no English now speaks fluently. He explained that he was helped to learn English very quickly. Pupils play happily together on the playground and, at the end of a busy and very active morning break, line up quietly and quickly because they have

respect for the adults who supervise and work with them. This respect was also evident when we walked around the school and observed pupils' good behaviour in lessons.

When I looked at pupils' books as we went round the classrooms, and when I looked at a sample of writing in different subjects with the English leader, it was evident that handwriting and presentation in pupils' books are messy and do not reflect the pride they have in their work and in their school. This is because you do not have a systematic, whole-school approach to teaching letter formation and handwriting.

You have taken on the leadership of the school with enthusiasm and determination, ably supported by the special educational needs coordinator (SENCo). You have driven improvement in teaching and learning effectively over the last year and, as a result, outcomes for all groups of pupils, in all year groups, have improved. It is evident from the 33 responses to the staff questionnaire that a minority of staff have concerns about approaches to leadership, although most say they enjoy working at the school. You are aware of these concerns and want to make sure that staff understand roles and responsibilities in the school and feel equally valued and supported. The new chair of the governing body has a good understanding of the issues facing the school. He and the governors have full confidence in your ability to build up the staff team and continue to provide a good quality of education for the pupils.

You, the governors and the senior leadership team understand that following a period of considerable uncertainty, due to the headteacher's absence, your first priority is to improve staff confidence in the leadership team and involve them fully in whole-school improvement planning and development. You recognise that the current school improvement plan is not fit for purpose. You are in the process of drafting ideas for a new plan to share with staff so that everyone takes a full part in further improving the school.

Safeguarding is effective.

You have very strong systems in place to ensure that all pupils are safe. Your policies and procedures meet requirements. You have a lead designated safeguarding officer, and the SENCo and two other teachers have also been trained at this level. All staff receive regular training and, consequently, know what to do and who to inform if a safeguarding concern arises.

The SENCo supports the most vulnerable children exceptionally well. She has an excellent knowledge of each family and records are detailed and useful for all professionals involved. The SENCo is also skilled at making sure that families who need additional help get the support they need, for example through effective working with the nearby Sure Start children's centres. There is currently no chronology that sets out contacts with families and other professionals at the front of pupils' files, which your policy states there should be. The SENCo has already started work to put these in place. She has taken rapid and effective action to

improve attendance for pupils receiving school support for special educational needs and/or disabilities. As a result, these pupils' attendance is now similar to all pupils nationally.

Inspection findings

- We agreed the following key lines of enquiry:
 - How effective are systems to evaluate the needs of children when they come into the Nursery?
 - How effective are systems for identifying pupils' special educational needs and how do leaders ensure that these needs are met?
 - How effective are the actions that leaders are taking to improve boys' reading and comprehension in key stage 2?
 - How do leaders, including governors, ensure that the school's behaviour policy is adhered to, keeps pupils safe and supports good behaviour?
 - How do governors ensure that additional government funds, for example the pupil premium and the sport premium, are used effectively and according to government requirements?
- You have supported the new early years leader effectively. Consequently, she makes a full and accurate assessment of children's learning needs when they start school. She has worked with you to improve children's communication skills, their self-confidence and their ability to manage their feelings and behaviour. Several parents like the behaviour-management system so much that they have adopted this approach at home and say their children behave just as well at home as they do at school. The new 'stage' in the outside area is proving very popular with the Reception children. The recent performance by 'the band' has inspired other children, including Nursery children, to gain confidence and share their talents and interests, for example the aspiring rock star with his 'air guitar'.
- There is a high proportion of pupils identified as having special educational needs and/or disabilities in the school. The SENCo has a good understanding of the categories of need set out in the special needs code of practice and has accurately identified pupils' additional needs. The SENCo has put effective programmes in place to support pupils' learning needs and ensured that all staff are trained in how to meet these needs, for example recent training in how to support pupils with sensory difficulties. The SENCo works effectively with external specialists, with very positive results. For example, the specialist provision for pupils with behaviour difficulties has significantly reduced the number of fixed-term exclusions this year. Money allocated to meet pupils' needs is used effectively because the progress they make over time is as good as other pupils.
- The literacy leader rightly identified that boys' understanding of what they read was not as good as girls' in last year's Year 6 test results. She has worked effectively with the staff to review and change the approach to teaching reading in key stage 2. Consequently, reading has improved this year with more pupils reaching the expected standard in all year groups.
- You have recognised that the school's current behaviour policy does not reflect

the good behaviour management approaches used by staff. This is one of the policies currently being updated by you and the governors.

- The local authority is providing good support to the school. It is committed to helping governors understand how to check that the additional funding the school receives from the government is used effectively and that the impact of this funding is reported in full on the school website. Currently, the school website is not compliant because it does not include all the required information: there is no analysis of the impact of interventions funded by the pupil premium or activities funded by the sport premium.

Next steps for the school

Leaders and those responsible for governance should ensure that:

- leadership is strengthened by making sure that all staff fully understand roles and responsibilities in the staff team and that the school improvement plan is fit for purpose
- governors stringently check how additional government funding is spent and that information about this spending and its impact is reported in full on the school website
- the school behaviour policy is an accurate reflection of the school's agreed approach to managing pupils' behaviour
- the quality of pupils' handwriting and presentation improves in all their written work.

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

Yours sincerely

Julie Winyard
Her Majesty's Inspector

Information about the inspection

During the inspection, I held meetings with you, the SENCo, the assessment coordinator, the English leader, the early years leader, all the staff, the chair and vice-chair of the governing body and a parent governor. I also spoke with a group of pupils from Years 3, 4 and 5, the local authority and 12 parents. I read with two Year 4 pupils and two Year 5 pupils. I scrutinised your self-evaluation, improvement plan, all documents and information related to safeguarding, information about attendance, recent pupil achievement information and a sample of pupils' writing in different subjects. We toured all the classes, observing pupils' behaviour and learning. I observed pupils' behaviour before school and during morning breaktime.

I took account of staff views expressed in the staff questionnaire and pupils' views in the pupil questionnaire. There were no responses on Parent View. I also examined the school website and established that some required information was not included; therefore, the website is not compliant.