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Mrs Karen Hyams
Headteacher
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Dear Mrs Hyams

Short inspection of Hill Top Primary School

Following my visit to the school on 12 October 2015, 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 April 2011.

This school continues to be good.

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

A strong sense of care and nurture surrounds everything the school does. The well-being of pupils is central to your vision as the headteacher and in realising this you are well supported by leaders, staff and governors. The attention given to pupils' personal development underpins the strong engagement and behaviour of pupils. They work hard in lessons and offer support and help to each other. As a result, pupils enjoy school and seek to benefit from all the school has to offer.

Those pupils and parents who spoke to me were very positive about the school. All were keen to emphasise the way the school made them feel welcome and part of the Hill Top family. This included pupils who had only recently started at the school. Nearly all of the parents who completed Ofsted's online survey (Parent View) held similarly positive views. Parents say that staff are approachable, communication between the school and parents is good and they are able to raise concerns either directly with staff or through surveys.

The relatively new leadership team has analysed information about pupils' achievement, checked pupils' work and visited lessons to gather an accurate view of the strengths and weaknesses in the school.

Leaders have acted quickly on the findings of their monitoring to introduce strategies to improve pupils' reading. This is having an impact on improving standards by accelerating pupils' progress in Key Stage 1. The signs are that these initiatives are starting to bite at Key Stage 2, although a little more slowly. Pupils have responded positively to the new approach to reading and some of those who spoke with me were eager to have an even wider range of books to read in school.

The leadership team have sought further to improve pupils' writing by increasing opportunities for pupils to use their writing skills in other subjects, for example, history and science. However, pupils' work shows there is further to go in developing writing. This includes encouraging pupils to have their own ideas, write from their own imaginations and get the most from links with their reading.

Since the last inspection there has been a strong improvement in the achievement of the most-able pupils. A good proportion of pupils achieved higher levels in reading, writing and mathematics in the end of Key Stage 2 national assessments in 2015. In contrast, the good progress of the less-able pupils is not showing the same strengthening picture over time.

Safeguarding is effective.

Where pupils are vulnerable or at risk, the school takes effective action to support them and works with other agencies to make sure pupils are kept safe. Staff are vigilant and mindful of the potential dangers to pupils. As a result, both pupils and parents fully agree that the school keeps pupils safe. This positive view of school is also reflected in the high rates of attendance and pupils' very positive behaviour. Comments by pupils confirm leaders' views that bullying is rare and that pupils behave very well both in lessons and at playtimes.

The leadership team has ensured the day-to-day safeguarding arrangements are fit for purpose. Leaders accept that the quality of records and administrative aspects should be sharpened.

Inspection findings

- Leaders have a clear programme of checking and observing the quality of teaching and learning in the school. This has helped them quickly to identify and target improvements where needed. For example, leaders identified that teachers' marking and feedback required greater consistency across the school. Leaders have reviewed the school marking policy and taken steps to ensure that all teachers follow agreed procedures. As a result, pupils' work is marked frequently and pupils are clear about how they should correct their work.
- Most pupils make good progress in the majority of year groups and enjoy school. As a result of stronger teaching, there have been improvements in

reading and mathematics in Key Stage 1. In the early years, teachers develop children's phonic skills well through focused teaching and making the most of opportunities in children's play to reinforce children's understanding. For example, children enjoyed reading simple words on the back of golden coins and used the treasure maps they had drawn and labelled to join in a pirate adventure with a group of fearsome female pirates.

- Observations and scrutiny of pupils' work confirm teachers and teaching assistants sometimes do not expect enough from less-able pupils. Occasionally, the support they receive does not give these pupils enough opportunities to think for themselves. Additionally the work they are set does not always challenge them to make the same progress as their more-able peers.
- The curriculum is carefully planned to give children a broad education. The best lessons flow from imaginative activities and lively teaching that nurtures a love of learning and deepens pupils' understanding and knowledge of the world. Pupils learn about different cultures and faiths. They know they should respect others' differences but their learning about wider aspects of diversity in modern Britain is not as strongly developed.
- As at the time of the last inspection, there has been significant change in the governance of the school. Few of the previous governors remain and some, including the Chair of Governors, have only taken up their positions very recently. Already, they have established a programme of visits to see the school's work for themselves, and are clear about their roles. They are aware that they have training needs to help them fulfil their duties and have conducted an audit of skills and identified appropriate training.

Next steps for the school

Leaders and governors should ensure that:

- the progress of less-able pupils accelerates, and the teaching and support they receive enables them to think for themselves
- those new to their roles in governance receive appropriate training to help them rigorously check on the difference leaders are making and ensure that policies and procedures are sharp and inclusive.

Yours sincerely

Adrian Guy

Her Majesty's Inspector

Information about the inspection

During this one day inspection I was able to discuss the work of the school with you, your two assistant headteachers and other staff. I talked with pupils and parents about what it feels like to be a member of the school community and looked at parent questionnaires. I observed and spoke with pupils during lunchtime and at other times during the day. Discussions with a representative of the local authority and two school governors helped to provide additional information. School documentation, assessment information, policies and information posted on the school website were taken into account. Alongside you, I was able to visit all classrooms to observe teaching and learning, and to consider the progress made by pupils through scrutiny of work in their books.