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Miss Vanessa Hicks  
Headteacher  
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Isle of Wight  
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Dear Miss Hicks

### **Short inspection of Gurnard Primary School**

Following my visit to the school on 5 May 2016, 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 May 2012.

#### **This school continues to be good.**

The leadership team has maintained the good quality of education in the school since the last inspection. You have set a determined pace for improvement in the first two terms of your leadership, tackling difficult but necessary changes sensitively. Governors recognise that the vibrancy of the school has changed under your leadership and that it is moving forward rapidly. Staff understand your vision for the school and say they feel motivated and valued. Parents notice your commitment to making staff and leaders visible and accessible. One parent commented, 'I love how the head greets everyone every morning with a big smile.'

Pupils progress well in their learning at school because you ensure teachers prioritise 'teaching the right things to the right pupils at the right time.' In lessons, pupils respond positively to the stretch and challenge that is routinely expected in every lesson. Leaders secure high-quality training for staff, which raises teachers' ability to respond quickly and accurately to pupils' needs. This positively influences pupils' attitudes towards subjects such as reading and mathematics. Pupils want to learn and they show courteous behaviour in lessons. Pupils say that the majority of their peers are considerate of others during learning and play. They enjoy making their contribution to building a happy, safe school through leadership roles, such as Young Governors.

You and other senior leaders check the progress of pupils regularly and use a wide range of information about pupils' learning to help you shape programmes of

support so they are bespoke for each pupil. Leaders know which pupils are at risk of not meeting the expected standards for their age and have prioritised support appropriately. Comparisons with national indicators are unreliable for pupils who are disadvantaged due to low numbers in each year group. However, disadvantaged pupils in the school achieve very well and make good progress from their starting points.

The last inspection identified the need to raise the attainment of pupils in mathematics, accelerate pupils' progress by ensuring teachers made good use of assessment information to plan activities, and develop the roles of subject leaders so they were accountable for raising achievement in their subjects. Leaders have tackled these areas effectively so that:

- teaching in mathematics has strengthened, particularly in the levels of challenge posed for the most-able pupils, leading to increasing rates of progress for all pupil groups
- new systems to capture and track performance information are used routinely by teachers when planning activities so that activities start at a high enough point
- subject leaders, many of whom are new to post this academic year, carry out a wide range of regular checks so that they know whether the actions they take are effective in raising achievement.

Although pupils' overall achievement is good, progress is not as strong for all pupils in writing as it is in mathematics and reading. Teaching does not pinpoint precisely enough the gaps in pupils' technical accuracy when writing to enable their progress to be more rapid.

Leaders and governors have prioritised action to improve the school's partnership with parents. They have ensured the school's website is an informative and helpful resource for parents. Leaders recently surveyed parents' views across a broad range of topics, publishing parents' comments and the actions leaders have taken in response. Many parents have welcomed this 'you said, we did' approach. Leaders know, however, that some parents feel that there is more to do. Some feel that leaders' response to their concerns and the information they receive about the progress pupils make is not timely or informative enough.

### **Safeguarding is effective.**

Leaders ensure that safeguarding training has been prioritised and updated in light of government guidance. All adults respond promptly to any issue of a safeguarding nature. They follow concerns through to ensure that all necessary action, including liaison with external partners, is taken. Leaders ensure there is prompt identification of any pupil that may be at risk of harm.

The leadership team has ensured that all safeguarding arrangements are fit for purpose and records are detailed and of high quality. Leaders' work to ensure the safety of vulnerable pupils who transfer between schools is exemplary. Pre-employment checks on staff meet requirements, with clear records kept of checks

made on all visitors, temporary staff and governors. Pupil attendance is high and well above the national average. No pupils are persistently absent.

## Inspection findings

- Leaders, including governors, communicate a clear strategy for continuing improvement. They have worked together to lead the school through a difficult but necessary change with determination and resilience, showing the school's vision of 'together we learn and grow' in action.
- Parents recognise change in the school. The majority are positive about the difference the school is making to their children's achievement. Parents say they are impressed with the range of visits and events; they like the strong community ethos and the commitment of adults in the school, who are 'striving for the best for our children'. Some parents, however, feel leaders' communication could be improved further.
- Leaders have provided high-quality, timely training for staff to improve leadership and teaching. This has included effective induction for new staff that have joined the school. Staff say that they feel supported in their new roles. Leaders' actions ensure that all teaching is good and improving strongly.
- Children in the early years make a strong start to key stage 1. This is because they achieve well across all areas of the foundation stage curriculum, including in number. Children were observed counting and doubling numbers to 10 while checking the number of legs on minibeasts. They launched cars along a number track to 20, recording the number each landed on in sequence. They considered which car was the winner by looking to see which they thought had the highest overall total. The proportion of children securing the expected standard in number has risen since the last inspection and is above the national average. This is because there are now plentiful opportunities for them to develop and apply number knowledge across the early years curriculum.
- In key stage 1 during the inspection, pupils experienced good opportunities to reason mathematically and extend their thinking. Pupils were challenged to explain how they can use calculation facts that they know to solve other problems. Teaching strengthened pupils' understanding, stretching pupils through carefully directed questions to help them explain their solutions and consider other possibilities. All pupils, including the most able, benefited from this approach and consequently most pupils are on track to meet the expected standards for their age.
- There are improved opportunities for pupils across key stage 2 to explore high-quality texts so they can look at how authors write effectively. This approach is helpfully informing pupils' writing and improving their understanding of the overall effect that their writing has on a reader. In Year 4, pupils worked to identify the most important descriptive language used to orientate the reader and grab their attention by looking at J.K. Rowling's description of Gringott's Bank. They accurately identified 'precious stones', 'glass counters' and 'burnished bronze doors' as examples. Reading continues to be a strength of the school, supported further by these opportunities to interrogate text. Pupils' achievement in reading, including

for those pupils who are disadvantaged and supported by additional funding, is higher than that of pupils nationally at all stages.

- Leaders accurately identify that progress in writing for some pupils is not currently as rapid as progress in mathematics and reading. Scrutiny of pupils' writing shows that teaching does not focus precisely enough on pupils' technical accuracy to close gaps in achievement.
- Subject leaders make good use of information about the progress pupils make and their checks on the quality of teaching to inform their action planning. They are held closely to account for the changes they make and report regularly to senior leaders and governors about the impact of actions. They are passionate about their subject areas and have high aspirations for pupils.
- Governors evaluate the use of additional funding carefully. They have challenged and supported leaders' decisions to change the way that additional support is delivered to pupils. As a result, all pupils benefit from daily high-quality teaching in class in reading, writing and mathematics because funding has been used effectively to provide additional training for staff. The leader with responsibility for pupils who have special educational needs or disability has a clear grasp of pupils' individual needs and evaluates closely the difference additional support makes to their progress.
- Pupils enjoy opportunities to show their leadership such as serving as Young Governors. They make the most of opportunities to take part in decision making, for example deciding which charities to support and choosing new resources for the playground. The Young Leadership Team present weekly awards, including those for sporting success and attendance. They especially appreciate the extended range of activities that the school offers them after school.
- Attendance at school is high. Pupils carefully follow the rules set out by adults. They know that they are responsible for making the right choices in their work and play to maintain their own and others' safety. They say they are confident that there is an adult to talk to when occasional concerns arise.

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

Leaders and those responsible for governance should ensure that:

- the effectiveness of the school's communication with parents and carers is developed further to ensure better understanding and raise confidence in the work of the school
- teaching focuses precisely on gaps in pupils' technical accuracy when writing so that they secure the expected standard in writing for their age.

I am copying this letter to the chair of the governing body and the director of children's services for the Isle of Wight. This letter will be published on the Ofsted website.

Yours sincerely

Abbie Wilkinson  
**Her Majesty's Inspector**

### **Information about the inspection**

I met with you, other leaders, pupils and five governors. I also met with a representative of the local authority. I visited eight classes in the school with senior leaders. I met with other leaders to review samples of pupils' work in writing and mathematics across key stage 2. I took account of 34 responses to Ofsted's staff survey and 129 responses by parents to Ofsted's online questionnaire, Parent View. In addition, I considered 134 responses by pupils to their online survey and a further 108 written comments from parents. I spoke with a group of pupils from across the school. I analysed a range of the school's documentation, including leaders' checks on pupils' current performance, the school improvement plan, leaders' checks on the quality of teaching, learning and assessment, and safeguarding policies and procedures. I reviewed leaders' correspondence with parents and records of behaviour. I discussed your own evaluation of the school's performance with you.