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A Noake
Headteacher
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Dear Mrs Noake

Short inspection of Hoath Primary School

Following my visit to the school on 11 January 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 May 2013.

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 managed the considerable changes to staffing very well. All teachers currently in school have joined since the previous inspection and you have recruited several new teaching assistants. In addition, the new building has recently been completed and pupils moved into their new classrooms last term. Despite these changes, you have successfully worked with governors to ensure that the school continues to be good.

As headteacher of two schools in the federation, you share your time across both sites. You have made sure that the federation has been of benefit to the school. Staff told me how much they value the joint working partnerships they have with their colleagues across the federation. They say that the opportunities these bring to share ideas for teaching and learning, as well as good practice, are important aspects of their work.

You are a strong, inspiring leader. You lead with a clarity of thought and a relentless determination to make sure all pupils achieve well. You have established a very strong team within the school. Governors share your ambition and work closely with you to drive improvements. Your work to develop the role of subject leaders is very successful. They told me how much they appreciate your support, which has enabled them to play a full part in the school's ongoing improvement. You, together with your staff team, have created and fostered a 'family' ethos where every pupil is

known as an individual. Pupils enjoy playing with friends, both in their own class and with other pupils of all ages. This makes for a really harmonious school where pupils behave well, are happy and feel well cared for.

You and your staff make frequent checks on pupils' progress and make sure that extra support is given to pupils who need it. As a result, pupils achieve well and make good progress from their different starting points.

At the time of the last inspection, the many strengths of your school were recognised, including the positive behaviour of pupils, the broad and interesting curriculum and the confidence parents have in the work of the school. The inspector also identified a need to make sure that:

- teachers' expectations of the most able pupils are always high and that the work set for them is consistently challenging
- pupils have regular opportunities to share their thoughts and ideas so that teachers can check their understanding
- activities in the early years outdoor area are as stimulating and engaging as those in the classroom.

Leaders have ensured that the strengths identified at the last inspection have continued, as well as effectively addressing the areas for improvement. A great deal of good work has been done to improve the provision for the most able pupils. However, with the change in staffing, together with the raised expectations of the new curriculum, leaders recognise that more needs to be done. Pupils now regularly talk about their learning during lessons and teachers listen carefully to check pupils' understanding. Reception children now thoroughly enjoy their learning outside. During the inspection, they wrapped up warmly and gathered sticks, which they measured with cubes back in the classroom. This was an exciting activity which is typical of how teachers make sure children learn well, both outdoors and in the classroom.

However, you and your team are not complacent. You know that your website is not yet providing all the information it should and you have already allocated a member of staff to rectify this. You have also recognised the need to provide more training for teaching assistants so that they provide consistently high-quality support for pupils, especially those who are disadvantaged.

Safeguarding is effective.

There is a strong and effective culture of safeguarding in the school. All parents I spoke to, as well as those who completed Ofsted's online survey, agreed that their children are well looked after and that the school keeps them safe. The leadership team has ensured that all safeguarding arrangements are fit for purpose and records are detailed and of high quality. Induction arrangements for new staff are thorough and appropriate checks are made. Staff speak confidently about how to report any safeguarding concerns. They know that any concerns are taken seriously

and that appropriate action will be taken. Pupils' safety and welfare are standing items on the agenda for staff meetings and have a high profile. A member of staff is always visible at the school gate in the morning if parents want to talk. Pupils told me they feel safe and that they would be able to talk to a member of staff if they had worries. The site is kept safe and secure. You recognise the important role that the family liaison officer plays in providing a channel of communication for families, to provide advice and 'signpost' support from external agencies. Although your safeguarding policy is not fully up to date on the website, it is very clear that practice to ensure safeguarding is effective.

Inspection findings

- Disadvantaged pupils increasingly make good progress across the school. Leaders know the particular barriers that individual pupils face and work closely with families to provide support and guidance. The achievement of disadvantaged pupils is closely tracked and extra support is given where needed. This support is usually well targeted on their individual needs. However, leaders recognise that teaching assistants need even more training to make sure the support they give is as good as it can be.
- Leaders recognise that continuing to improve provision for the most able pupils remains a priority for the school. Leaders were disappointed that more pupils did not reach the high standards in the 2016 national tests at the end of Year 6. However, the workbooks of the most able pupils currently in school show that they make good progress in a range of subjects. This is because teachers are now more aware of the higher demands of the new curriculum. The most able pupils spoken to during the inspection told the inspector that they enjoy having to think hard about their work and that they would like even more 'tricky' challenges.
- Pupils who have special educational needs and/or disabilities make good progress. This is because the assistant headteacher works closely with staff to quickly identify pupils' needs and to provide good support. The attendance of this group of pupils has improved since last year, largely due to the close liaison and positive relationships that school staff, including the assistant headteacher and the family liaison officer, have with families.
- The induction arrangements and ongoing professional development of staff new to the school are very effective. Staff have many opportunities to spend time in school prior to their appointment and this helps them to settle in quickly. They particularly value the high level of support and training provided by the headteacher and subject leaders. The good induction and professional development they receive help to make sure that, despite staff turnover, provision for pupils has remained good.

Next steps for the school

Leaders and those responsible for governance should ensure that:

- teaching provides appropriate challenge for the most able pupils to enable them to reach the high standards of which they are capable
- training is provided for teaching assistants so they give consistently high quality support to pupils who need extra help
- the website is up to date and reflects the good practice evident in the school.

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

Yours sincerely

Joanna Toulson
Ofsted Inspector

Information about the inspection

I met with you, your assistant headteacher, subject leaders, staff new to the school, a group of the most able pupils and representatives of the governing body. I had a telephone discussion with a representative of the local authority. You and I spent most of the morning in classrooms, observing teaching and learning and scrutinising a range of pupils' work. I took account of the 25 responses by parents, five pupils' responses and nine staff responses to Ofsted's online survey. I also spoke to several parents at the start of the school day. I looked at a range of documentation, including information about pupils' progress and records relating to safeguarding.