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31 January 2016

Ms Lou Harrison
Headteacher
Heather Primary School
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Dear Ms Harrison

Short inspection of Heather Primary School

Following my visit to the school on 17 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 November 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 provide good leadership for a committed team of teachers and support staff. Your self-evaluation is accurate and provides school leaders, including governors, with a clear understanding of the school's strengths and where it needs to improve further. This is linked effectively to a development plan that sets out, in detail, your strategies to make things better for pupils. Your vision for the school is clear and well communicated. You place pupils and their life chances at the centre of the school's work. You also value pupils' views very highly and work hard to ensure that these views, alongside those of their parents, are listened to and acted upon.

You have responded quickly to a decline in the standard of writing within the school. In 2016 assessments, pupils' standards in writing fell below the national average. This is in contrast to previous years when standards have been at least in line with the national average. Your work to improve things has been successful, especially in key stage 2, where many pupils are making rapid progress. Progress has not been as swift in key stage 1, where further work is needed.

Leaders' work to check on the quality of teaching means that the needs of individual teachers are well known, and the support that is being provided is matched to these

needs. The highly effective teaching that is taking place in parts of the school is being well used to promote high standards throughout all classrooms. This best practice, especially in matching work and activities to the learning needs of pupils, has been very successful in raising standards quickly in some classrooms.

Your assessment systems are providing you with an increasingly clear understanding of how well pupils are doing, both as individuals and in groups. The accuracy of teachers' assessment is, however, not fully consistent and some variation remains. Your tracking of pupils' progress has led to some very precise support for those who are at risk of underachievement, and there are some compelling success stories. The greatest success, however, lies with the small group of disadvantaged pupils within the school. Over half of these pupils, who are eligible for pupil premium funding, are making swifter progress than other pupils and are attaining at a higher level. Of the others, all are progressing at the same rate as other pupils and none are below where they should be. This is largely due to the interventions that you have provided and the careful tracking of all pupils.

The school is a calm and welcoming place for pupils to learn. Pupils behave well around the school and in lessons. They told me that their lessons were rarely disrupted and, when this did occur, it was handled quickly and effectively. Playtimes are enjoyable occasions where pupils socialise and play well with one another. Formal gatherings of pupils, such as assemblies, are also enjoyed by pupils because they are given the chance to contribute their thoughts and feelings.

Governors are well led and effectively organised. They are provided with clear information about the school's performance and are increasingly effective at asking searching questions of school leaders. Effective systems are in place to ensure that all actions agreed at previous meetings have been carried through. Governors are currently linked to subjects and year groups. They report on their visits and reflect on their findings openly.

Safeguarding is effective.

The school's work to safeguard pupils complies with statutory requirements. Systems and procedures to undertake pre-employment checks on staff are securely in place. In addition, other adults, including governors, volunteers and supply staff, are checked carefully. You monitor the single central register (where all of this information is stored) on a regular basis and governors also carry out systematic checks.

Staff training is up to date with regards to safeguarding. You keep a comprehensive record of which staff have received specific training, including dates and renewal points. Staff are aware of their responsibilities with regard to child protection and systems are clear and well communicated.

Pupils say that they feel safe. Their parents agree; all parents spoken to during the inspection were positive about this aspect of the school's work. In addition, 97% of parents who responded to the online questionnaire agreed that their child feels safe.

Pupils are confident that, should they need to talk to someone about a concern, there is an adult in school that they could turn to.

Inspection findings

- Leaders have acted successfully to tackle the decline in writing standards. Pupils across the school are now being offered more structured opportunities to write in a range of subjects. Where this is most successful, pupils are making rapid progress over time. This is clearly visible in pupils' literacy books, where advances in their use of grammar, spelling accuracy, sentence structure and the quality of presentation are all improving. In the early years, learning journeys clearly record the move from early writing and mark-making to forming letters clearly. In key stage 2, pupils are now showing a great deal more pride in their written work; this is apparent in the increasingly good standard of presentation in many pupils' books.
- Although writing is improving in almost all classes, an element of inconsistency remains, which means that some pupils in key stage 1 are not improving at the same rate as others. This is because not all pupils are being provided with a range of opportunities to write often enough and some of these pupils are at risk of falling behind.
- Leadership of literacy is effective and is a key factor in the rising standards. The leader is aware that some pupils are not enthused by the prospect of writing and is seeking to reverse this by encouraging reading to expose pupils to a richer variety of texts. This whole-school drive to increase pupils' appetite for reading is having a positive impact upon attitudes to writing.
- Senior leaders know the school in detail. Their monitoring activities are broad and focus on all aspects of the school's work. Ambitious targets and careful tracking of assessment information support the school's improvements. As a result, teaching is effective. Where support is needed, leaders work with individual teachers and have made good use of the local teaching schools alliance to source additional help.
- Performance management plays a central role in holding teachers to account. Leaders undertake pupil progress meetings twice each term to scrutinise the impact that teachers are having on the learning of individual pupils and groups, including disadvantaged pupils.
- Leaders undertake regular scrutiny of pupils' work on a formal, scheduled basis. However, the use of ongoing work scrutiny is not yet embedded in leaders' day-to-day quality assurance strategies. This means that opportunities to keep a check on pupils' learning, and the quality of teaching over time, are being missed.
- Pupils are making good progress in almost all year groups. The assessment information is usefully and simply presented and gives teachers and leaders a very clear picture of how things are going. As a result, leaders have both a holistic view of each year group's performance alongside a more detailed analysis of the progress that every pupil is making. Assessment information, confirmed by the work in pupils' books, indicates that in some year groups a good proportion of

pupils are already confidently using skills expected by the end of the academic year.

- Pupils currently in Year 3 have performed less well than other year groups in the past. Work in their books, along with assessment information, confirms that they are now making more progress than in the past. Expectations for pupils in Year 3 are higher than before and they are responding well to this. This is shown in the rising proportion of pupils working at age-related expectations in reading, writing and mathematics over the autumn term.
- Teaching assistants and learning support assistants provide effective support for pupils. In some classes, this support is exceptionally effective because it is focused on enabling pupils to become independent rather than allowing them to rely on support. Good relationships between staff and pupils are effective in supporting learning and promoting good attitudes to work.
- The school has received valuable support from Forest Way Teaching School Alliance. This has included leadership support when the headteacher was absent due to ill health. In addition, support to improve writing has been well received and has contributed to the school's ongoing successes.

Next steps for the school

Leaders and those responsible for governance should ensure that:

- assessments of pupils' work and progress are accurate in all classes
- expectations of pupils' writing in key stage 1 are higher
- the sampling of pupils' work by school leaders becomes a more frequent part of their checks on the quality of teaching.

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

Yours sincerely

Christopher Moodie
Ofsted Inspector

Information about the inspection

I made at least one visit to all classrooms where I observed teaching, looked at pupils' work and spoke with pupils. The headteacher accompanied me on almost all of these visits. I met with the headteacher, two senior leaders, a representative of the local authority and a representative of Forest Way Teaching School Alliance to discuss the school's performance and evaluate the quality of leadership. In addition,

I met and had a discussion with five governors. I evaluated school documentation, including its self-evaluation and development plans. I scrutinised systems and documentation associated with safeguarding.