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Vicky Brand and Ms Gemma Sharma
Headteachers
Homer First School and Nursery
Testwood Road
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Dear Ms Brand and Ms Sharma

Short inspection of Homer First School and Nursery

Following my visit to the school on 25 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 worked in close partnership with the governors and the local authority to build a strong staff team that is ambitious for themselves and the pupils. You have maintained a strong sense of purpose and created a culture in which staff seek new ways of working to ensure that pupils make good progress. As leaders, you encourage teachers to innovate and try new ideas and this encouragement helps teachers to provide a curriculum that is exciting and adds to pupils' enjoyment of school.

Pupils are happy and feel safe in school. They like their teachers and trust adults to help should they have a concern. They attend regularly and work hard in lessons. Teachers demonstrate kindness and encourage pupils to treat others with respect and consideration. This helps them to develop an understanding of life in modern Britain and prepares them well for the next steps in their education.

Since the last inspection, you have continued to strengthen the school at all levels to build on your previous success. You have acted on all areas that were identified for improvement at the previous inspection. Pupils enjoy producing lengthy pieces of writing both in their English lessons and when learning other subjects. They enjoy responding to challenging questions by teachers that deepen their understanding and make them work hard. Teachers act on support and guidance from local authority training to provide imaginative ways of teaching pupils difficult

concepts, such as fractions. Deepening pupils' understanding of these concepts helps them to make consistently good progress over time.

You are in the process of updating the school's website to provide parents with a greater flavour of what their children experience at school. While this work is underway, you recognise that, at the time of this inspection, the website did not meet all statutory requirements for what should be included. This is something that you and the governors are addressing. You know that there are some remaining inconsistencies in the way in which phonics is taught and are taking action to remedy this. While leadership of English is strong, you are working with the local authority to increase the skills of the mathematics leader.

Safeguarding is effective.

There is a strong culture of safety within the school. Staff and governors have been provided with up-to-date training on what to do should they have concerns about a child. Leaders work closely with families to provide timely support for any pupils whose circumstances may make them more vulnerable. They act quickly on any concerns to ensure that pupils receive the right help quickly.

Leaders make sure that safeguarding arrangements are fit for purpose and records are detailed and of high quality. All staff and governors have had recent training and leaders ensure that all records are up to date and fit for purpose. This helps staff to be vigilant and effective in their roles. Governors and staff understand their moral and professional obligation to keep pupils safe.

Inspection findings

- The main areas of focus for this inspection were: how effectively phonics is taught; pupils' learning and progress in mathematics; and what leaders have done to improve the school since the last inspection. I also looked at the progress made by pupils who have special educational needs and/or disabilities and how well the most able disadvantaged pupils are challenged.
- Leaders have an accurate understanding of the school's strengths and weaknesses and they take decisive and speedy action to improve outcomes for pupils. Consequently, pupils are safe and happy and they achieve well.
- Actions taken by school leaders have led to further improvements in teaching. Leaders provide high-quality training for staff. Teachers have also been involved in local authority projects that have led to some innovative approaches to teaching. For example, in a Year 4 science lesson, pupils were shown how volcanoes are formed. They then completed a fault tree analysis to decide if samples of different types of rock were sedimentary, metamorphic or igneous, based on the information provided. This gave rise to some stimulating discussions and helped pupils to make good progress in learning about rock formation.
- Following disappointing results in phonics in 2016, leaders identified that this group of pupils had experienced some disruption to their learning owing to

staffing issues that had an impact on their progress. There were a few pupils who struggled with communication and this issue had not been picked up. This has now been addressed and the school has also reviewed the way in which phonics is taught.

- Pupils in Year 2 read fluently and confidently and use their phonics securely to read unknown words. In Year 4, pupils' writing shows they spell accurately, demonstrating good knowledge of phonics. Teaching of phonics in some classes is lively and engaging, with children in the Reception class eagerly searching for words that teachers had 'hidden' around the classroom. However, not all teachers use resources that are engaging and help pupils to make good progress. The level of phonics taught in some classes is too low and this slows pupils' progress.
- Teachers have used ideas from a recent local authority project to improve the way in which mathematics is taught. This is increasing pupils' enjoyment of the subject as well as improving the progress they make. For example, pupils in Year 3 were learning equivalent fractions by thinking of ways to share a two-fingered chocolate bar equally between three people. They worked in pairs and this generated a lot of lively discussion as well as enabling pupils to make good progress.
- Leaders and governors have reviewed the way that provision is targeted towards disadvantaged pupils. The pupil premium champion has identified particular barriers to learning that may affect these pupils. This leader works successfully alongside staff to ensure that these pupils are provided with the right support to help them to overcome their difficulties. Consequently, these pupils now achieve at least in line with other pupils.
- The school has a small number of pupils who have special educational needs and/or disabilities. The special educational needs coordinator liaises with teachers to ensure that lessons are adapted to meet the particular needs of these pupils. The progress of this group of pupils is carefully tracked. The support sought from outside agencies complements the work of the school in relation to pupils who are at risk of not progressing as well as they should. Highly trained teaching assistants support these pupils well by breaking learning into smaller steps, helping them to make good progress. Highly effective extra help with phonics and reading helps them to catch up with other pupils.

Next steps for the school

Leaders and those responsible for governance should ensure that:

- the school is fully compliant with the statutory requirements for what it should publish on the website
- there is a consistent approach to teaching phonics that all staff follow
- the role of the leader for mathematics is developed in order to support other staff and to develop the subject further.

I am copying this letter to the chair of the governing body, the regional schools

commissioner and the director of children's services for Windsor and Maidenhead. This letter will be published on the Ofsted website.

Yours sincerely

Joy Considine
Ofsted Inspector

Information about the inspection

I visited seven classrooms with you to look at how well pupils were learning. I spoke to pupils in class and in the playground and I looked at work in their books. I listened to pupils reading in Year 2. I met with you, the English leader and governors. I also met with two representatives from the local authority. I reviewed the school's self-evaluation and development plans, policies, the website and the school's own records relating to the quality of teaching. I considered the 75 responses to the Parent View online survey. I took account of staff responses to the questionnaire that was recently administered by the school. I checked safeguarding arrangements, including training and the school's record of recruitment checks.