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Mrs Julie Hawkin
Headteacher
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Dear Mrs Hawkin

Short inspection of Hardwick Community Primary School

Following my visit to the school on 28 March 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 September 2011.

This school continues to be good.

Your strong leadership has ensured that the good quality of education in the school has been maintained since the last inspection. Together with your leadership team and governors, you have very effectively managed the school through a period of change. In recent times, you have managed changes to staffing as well as to the changing nature of the school's intake. The school is now a more diverse community with an increasing number of pupils who speak English as an additional language. Throughout this period, you have maintained stability and ensured that standards remain high. You know the school well and your drive and commitment to ensure the very best for all pupils shine through. This is evident in your school development plan that sets ambitious targets for further improvement. Everyone at Hardwick works closely together and shares in your ambition for pupils to achieve well.

In 2016, pupils achieved well. The proportion of pupils in key stage 2 who achieved the standards expected for their age in reading, writing and mathematics was above that seen nationally. Current pupils in key stage 2 make significant and sustained progress enabling them to achieve highly, particularly in writing. However, in key stage 1 pupils' progress in writing is not as strong. You have rightly identified this as a key area for improvement. You track the progress of pupils carefully and rigorously, enabling you and other leaders to quickly respond if any pupils are at risk of falling behind. In the early years, all groups, including disadvantaged children, those whose first language is not English and children who have special educational needs and/or disabilities, get off to a good start. As a result of your

effective transition arrangements, these pupils are ready and confident to make a successful start to key stage 1. Across the school, although most pupils make good progress currently too few achieve the higher levels.

Leaders are successful in their aim to create a 'happy, caring, secure and well-ordered environment'. Pupils behave well, are respectful and courteous and try their best in lessons. They take pride in their work and are happy to talk to visitors about their achievements and share their learning. Pupils keep trying, even when they are finding some aspects challenging. For example, in the early years children kept trying to score in a ball game, taking great delight in counting up their scores to see who had gained the most points. Older pupils persevere and reason such as when solving complex shape and angle problems. Pupils are enthusiastic and there is a happy 'buzz' to learning. This is a school where pupils are totally absorbed by their learning. For example, in a Year 5 lesson about figurative language pupils gave thoughtful, well-considered responses. For example, one pupil described a scene of bare trees appearing 'like souls floating in the air'. Pupils achieve well and their enjoyment of writing effectively is tangible.

Pupils enjoy coming to school. They are especially enthusiastic about the many visits and extra activities that staff organise. Pupils describe their recent residential visit as 'amazing'. Many pupils benefit from and enjoy attending the breakfast club. Since its introduction, some pupils who previously had poor attendance now attend regularly. Pupils at this club take part in a wide range of physical activities such as badminton and skipping. They appreciate the importance of keeping fit and healthy. Parents are equally positive about the school and ensure that their children attend regularly. Every parent who responded to the online survey would recommend the school, with one parent, for example, describing the school as 'brilliant'.

At the time of the last inspection, inspectors recognised the many strengths of the school including pupils' good achievement as a result of good leadership. Inspectors identified a need to raise attainment in reading, writing and mathematics in key stage 1. Inspectors also asked for pupils to have more opportunities to develop their computing skills and also their understanding of different cultures within the United Kingdom. You have taken effective action to address these areas for improvement. Although the proportion of pupils who achieved the expected standard at the end of key stage 1 in 2016 was lower than that of other pupils nationally, pupils' progress was strong from their below typical starting points. In addition, more pupils than other pupils nationally achieved the higher standard in reading, writing and mathematics.

Governors have invested in improved computing facilities to enable pupils to have much better access to the world of technology and develop their skills appropriately. Teachers are making effective use of computer tablets, particularly in English and mathematics, to support pupils' learning well. You have also revitalised the curriculum to include greater emphasis on developing pupils' cultural understanding. Pupils' cultural appreciation is deepened effectively by special events such as the recent Spanish-themed cookery day, including enticing tasting sessions.

You, other leaders and governors are determined to keep improving the school and work effectively as a team. You have rightly identified writing in key stage 1 as an area for development, acknowledging that more is needed. Through your careful monitoring, you know where teaching is strongest and where further support is needed to make teaching even more effective.

Safeguarding is effective.

Keeping children safe is everybody's top priority. Parents and staff are unanimous in their view that pupils are kept safe at Hardwick School. Checks on the suitability of staff to work with children are in place and records are detailed and thorough. You make sure that staff have training at least once a year. In addition you include safeguarding training in the induction for all new staff. This ensures that all staff are confident in knowing how to spot any concerns, are alert to pupils' well-being and promptly refer on to you or one of the other designated leaders. You follow up any concerns quickly and where appropriate refer them to the relevant outside agencies.

The appointment of a home-school community link worker has further strengthened safeguarding practice. Early help is quickly enlisted to support pupils and their families. Equally, governors give a high priority to ensuring that appropriate arrangements are in place to keep pupils safe. They conduct an annual and detailed audit, make regular visits and ensure that safeguarding is always on the agenda.

Inspection findings

- During this inspection, together, we looked closely at: the effectiveness of the teaching of reading and writing in key stage 1; how well the most able pupils, including those who are disadvantaged, are progressing, particularly in reading; and how well children, particularly girls, achieve in the early years.
- Effective teaching of early reading has ensured that pupils achieve well in phonics. In the 2016 phonics screening check, pupils achieved above national standards. Pupils are given many opportunities to write in a wide range of genres and apply their understanding of letters and the sounds they make. Early structured support and guidance in reading and writing for pupils who speak English as an additional language have been highly effective. This support has ensured that these pupils make strong progress. They are beginning to understand different writing conventions such as how to begin and construct a diary entry.
- Teachers weave the development of pupils' punctuation and grammar skills into reading and writing activities effectively. This enables pupils to develop their reading and writing skills in context. For example, in key stage 1 pupils quickly learn how to use appropriate punctuation to join phrases together to make longer, more complex sentences. While progress in writing is good for all groups of pupils, including those who are disadvantaged, currently too few pupils in key stage 1 achieve the expected standard. There is still some ground to be made up for pupils to reach the standards expected for their age.

- Teachers plan many interesting activities for pupils to practise and develop their reading skills. This is helping pupils to become fluent, confident readers and read for enjoyment. Pupils benefit from the well-stocked, attractive library. The most able pupils read with expression, for example to indicate dialogue when reading back their own stories about Red Riding Hood. The school's tracking information shows that pupils, including the most able, are making particularly good progress in reading.
- In our visits to classrooms we saw teachers challenging the most able pupils very effectively. For example, pupils were challenged to make adventurous word choices and use personification, metaphors and similes in their writing. In mathematics, pupils confidently explain their thinking to solve complex problems. They hold high-level discussions, talking through strategies to find the answer. However, we agreed that sometimes when pupils are completing calculations teachers do not check consistently that pupils understand the methods they are using.
- From lower-than-typical starting points, children in the early years make good progress and achieve well. All groups, including girls, boys and those who are disadvantaged, make similar progress to their class mates. Children's personal and social development is promoted very well. Positive, warm relationships with adults help build children's confidence. As a result, children are settled and confident learners. In the Reception class, we saw children playing happily and cooperating well with one another, sharing and organising resources. There are many opportunities for children to develop their early skills in number, reading and writing. Some children are able to confidently tell the time to the nearest hour and can count and recognise numbers up to and beyond 20.
- You and other leaders have taken positive action to respond to the changing needs of pupils. The appointment of additional support staff means that pupils receive a higher level of support, particularly in speaking, early reading and writing. Children, particularly those at an early stage of English, make rapid gains and quickly become confident, fluent speakers. This enables them to achieve well and in line with their peers.

Next steps for the school

Leaders and those responsible for governance should ensure that:

- a greater proportion of pupils achieve the expected standard in writing in key stage 1
- more pupils make accelerated progress so that a greater proportion exceeds the standards expected for their age, including in the early years.

I am copying this letter to the chair of the governing body, the regional schools commissioner and the director of children's services for Oxfordshire. This letter will

be published on the Ofsted website.

Yours sincerely

Sue Cox
Her Majesty's Inspector

Information about the inspection

I met with you, other senior leaders and middle leaders. We discussed the school's self-evaluation, plans for improvement and information about pupils' current learning. We visited all classes to look at learning, talk with pupils and see pupils' work in books. I met with the chair of the governing body and four other members of the governing body. I also had a telephone conversation with an external consultant and met with the local authority school improvement partner. I reviewed a range of safeguarding documentation including the central record of recruitment checks, the safeguarding policy and safeguarding records. I met with 12 pupils from the school council and considered responses from 59 pupils who completed the online questionnaire. I considered the views of parents via the 24 responses to Parent View, Ofsted's online survey, an email response from a parent and the responses from the 10 members of staff who completed the Ofsted staff questionnaire. I also met some parents informally on the playground at the start of the school day.