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Tony Linnett
Hurst Primary School
Dorchester Avenue
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Dear Mr Tony Linnett

Short inspection of Hurst Primary School

Following my visit to the school on 21 March 2017 with Neil Harvey, Ofsted Inspector, 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 your predecessor school was judged to be good in September 2011.

This school continues to be good.

The leadership team has maintained the good quality of education in the school since the last inspection. As a result of your strong and dedicated leadership the school has continued to thrive and prosper since it became an academy in 2013.

You demonstrate a strong vision and moral purpose in your leadership of the school. This is exemplified in the way your five 'Golden Rules' are integral to every aspect of school life. These rules provide a clear framework and guidance for the good behaviour and mutual respect evident between all adults and pupils at Hurst Primary School.

Parents and carers speak highly of the work of leaders and staff. They feel that their children are kept safe and are prepared well for the next stages of their education. Parents also appreciate the fact that you have ensured that their children come to a school with beautiful grounds and play spaces. Pupils clearly enjoy their learning and this is reflected in their good attendance overall. However, absence rates for disadvantaged pupils are too high and remain above the national average.

The school provides a wide range of curriculum opportunities to support the holistic development of young children and pupils. You offer a wide range of sporting, musical and artistic activities. This supports pupils to develop into well-rounded individuals.

You acted swiftly to address the 2016 dip in results. Your perceptive analysis ensured that leaders understood fully why pupils did not achieve the standards of which they were capable. Senior leaders quickly adapted existing practice and made significant changes to the teaching of phonics. In addition, senior leaders have put in place interventions to

support the progress of disadvantaged pupils. This has led to this key group making rapid progress in their phonics skills.

You have been committed to ensuring high-quality teaching and have been successful in this goal. As a result, the majority of pupils make good progress from their different starting points. However, in writing, pupils' progress is not consistently strong. This is particularly the case in key stage 1 for pupils who have low prior attainment at the end of the early years.

You have recruited strong and ambitious senior and middle leaders to support your work to maintain pupils' good standard of education. You have the full confidence of an experienced, skilled and highly effective governing body who greatly value your contribution to the life of this community.

As you prepare for retirement, you have also ensured that the leadership of the school is in highly capable hands. Succession planning has been a key focus. Consequently, your deputy and senior leaders have the necessary skills and experience to ensure that the school continues to provide a good standard of education.

Safeguarding is effective.

Leaders have made sure that there is a strong culture of safeguarding within the school. Pupils say that they feel safe. They are aware of e-safety and know how to keep themselves safe online. A small number of parents expressed concern about how the school tackles bullying. A review of incident records showed that the school takes great time and effort to resolve any problems quickly. The school takes concerns very seriously.

Staff act promptly recording all actions thoroughly. All parents surveyed said they would recommend this school. Leaders have effective systems to monitor playtimes and share information with midday supervisors on a daily basis. As a result, staff and parents are clear about what to do if they have a concern.

The leadership team has ensured that safeguarding arrangements and records are detailed and regularly updated to a high standard. The single central record of checks determining the suitability of adults to work with children is kept up to date and is compliant with statutory requirements. The safeguarding policy on the school website is continually reviewed and updated and is bespoke to this school. This gives clear and useful information to staff and parents alike about what to do if they have any concerns.

Governors are well informed about safeguarding issues and play an effective role in monitoring all aspects of leaders' work in this crucial area. The chair of the governing body regularly checks the single central record. Staff and governors undertake frequent safeguarding training on a wide range of issues, including radicalisation and the risks around child sexual exploitation and grooming.

Inspection findings

- Senior and middle leaders have focused on maintaining high-quality teaching across the school. Teachers are well supported by all leaders and ensure that they are effective in the classroom. They plan and assess work collaboratively in order to share best practice.

- The assessment, monitoring and tracking of pupils in all key areas is thorough and typically accurate. New assessment systems are based around a mix of standardised tests and frequent internal moderation. Across all classes in the school, teachers know their pupils very well and plan work that is well matched to what pupils need to learn next. Teaching assistants are also well informed about how they can best help pupils learn.
- Pupil outcomes in 2014 and 2015 were strong. However, in 2016 pupils' progress dipped. This was particularly evident for pupils in key stage 1 with low prior attainment. Leaders quickly identified this and have implemented a wide range of strategies to address any differences in progress and attainment. As a result, pupils who have fallen behind are catching up quickly.
- Targeted interventions in key stage 1 are having an impact, ensuring that all groups of pupils make good progress in reading and mathematics. However, work in pupils' books shows that their progress in writing is not as strong.
- Pupils develop a broad range of mathematical skills and knowledge in line with the standards expected for their age. Pupils deepen their knowledge through frequent opportunities to reason mathematically and solve problems. This has been a successful focus for the school. Pupils are also given many opportunities to apply their skills in practical contexts. Disadvantaged pupils, those who are middle-attaining and pupils who have special educational needs and/or disabilities acquire skills and knowledge equally in line with the standards expected for their age.
- The majority of pupils who have special educational needs and/or disabilities make good progress from their starting points. Their needs are provided for successfully through individual support plans. These are reviewed and adjusted regularly to ensure that appropriate support is in place. This is supplemented well by termly reviews of pupils' needs, with high levels of parental involvement. Additional support in class is of good quality and is delivered by both teachers and teaching assistants. Consequently, pupils access learning alongside their peers.
- Leaders in key stage 1 have prioritised strengthening the quality of phonics teaching. This is because disadvantaged pupils have done less well than other pupils nationally for the last three years. Consequently, the school revised its curriculum for both the early years and key stage 1. Leaders also raised expectations for achievement.
- A systematic and highly structured approach to phonics teaching is now in place. Teachers and pupils clearly enjoy the teaching of phonics. All pupils now receive high-quality daily teaching to support them to develop the skills they need to read and write well. Teachers model precise phonic sounds and use technical language accurately. This enables disadvantaged pupils to make good progress in learning to read. The pupils I heard read were skilled in using phonics to read and decode words that they had not met before. Meticulous and accurate tracking of individual pupils ensures that leaders are quick to identify and support any pupils who are at risk of falling behind. However, pupils do not consistently apply their phonic knowledge when they are writing. As a result, pupils' progress in writing is not as strong as in reading.
- Attendance and persistent absence has been a key issue for the school for some time, particularly for disadvantaged pupils. The school uses a number of strategies to tackle absence, including individual surgeries for parents, who are offered support and guidance.

- Leaders have developed constructive partnerships with external agencies, including with the local authority and with social workers. This approach means that support is well targeted to the needs of individual pupils. However, additional support is not always having an impact on improving attendance, particularly for disadvantaged pupils. Leaders have rightly prioritised this as an area for further improvement. The school analyses patterns of attendance carefully and is clear about the work that needs to be done to support vulnerable pupils. However, levels of absence for disadvantaged pupils remain stubbornly high. More work is needed to tackle this so that these pupils are not disadvantaged by low attendance.

Next steps for the school

Leaders and those responsible for governance should ensure that:

- all groups of pupils make consistently good progress in writing, particularly at key stage 1
- all groups of pupils attend school as regularly as they should, with a particular focus on disadvantaged pupils

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

Yours sincerely

Sean Flood
Ofsted Inspector

Information about the inspection

During this inspection I held discussions with you and other senior and middle leaders. I held a telephone conversation with the head of school improvement for the local authority. I also held a meeting with members of the governing body. My colleague and I also spoke with parents and pupils, both in informal meetings, in class and in structured settings. We heard a wide range of readers across the school in all key stages. I observed pupils' behaviour in class, in the playgrounds and in the dining hall. Inspectors scrutinised books and pupils' work. We also observed teaching in classes alongside senior leaders. We examined and discussed the school's assessment system and progress tracking information. A wide range of documentation was scrutinised around safeguarding and attendance. This included bullying and incident logs. I considered the responses of 313 parents to Parent View and responses of pupils and staff to Ofsted's online surveys.