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15 June 2017

Mrs Amy Peart  
Headteacher  
Hythe Primary School  
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Dear Mrs Peart

### **Short inspection of The Hythe Community Primary School**

Following my visit to the school on 24 May 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 2011.

#### **This school continues to be good.**

The leadership team has maintained the good quality of education in the school since the last inspection. You took over the leadership of the school not long after the last inspection. Since then, you and your leadership team have successfully overseen the expansion of the school so that it is now much bigger. Together you have improved outdoor learning spaces in the playground and for early years. Pupils find the new external learning environment stimulating and inspiring.

Your senior leadership team work together superbly, sharing responsibilities effectively while ensuring a consistency of approach that supports the smooth running of the school. Hythe Primary school offers a nurturing and inclusive ethos. Pupils interact together very well to form a vibrant community. Pupils from a variety of different backgrounds integrate together seamlessly, are well cared for and happy. Pupils who attend 'The Harbour' special educational resource are particularly well supported and cared for, enabling them to make good progress.

You and governors have an accurate view of the school's strengths and areas for further development. Your plans for the school's continuing improvement are focused appropriately and revised promptly where needed. For example, since the last inspection you have adapted teaching to meet the changing demands of the national curriculum, but this year have rightly focused on further developing the challenge teachers provide in lessons.

At the last inspection, inspectors asked leaders to improve attendance. You and your team have responded to this successfully, specifically by highlighting to pupils and parents the positive effect that pupils' regular attendance has on pupils' learning and progress. As a result, overall attendance is now above national averages for primary schools, and persistent absence is diminishing rapidly.

Inspectors also asked leaders to improve pupils' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development so that pupils gain a greater awareness of life in modern Britain. You have provided numerous opportunities in your curriculum to do this. Most recent examples include learning about democracy through celebrating the local signing of the Magna Carta 800 years ago, hosting a tea party for local elderly people, and studying the celebrations of different religions. Pupils have taken the school's core values of 'inspire, include, invest' to heart and proudly showed me their 'values rap' at playtime.

### **Safeguarding is effective.**

Leaders have ensured that all safeguarding arrangements are fit for purpose and records are detailed and of good quality. Keeping children safe has an appropriately high priority in your school. You have created a clear set of safeguarding policies that provide useful guidance for parents and staff. You make sure that all staff receive relevant training and are alert to any concerns. You showed me compelling evidence that issues are followed up swiftly, and persistently if necessary, especially when they need to be referred to outside agencies.

The pupils I spoke to could explain clearly how to keep themselves safe, both online and in their community. They said that bullying is rare, but that if it does happen an adult will sort it out quickly. Pupils know that adults in the school will help them if they have a problem. They were particularly keen to tell me that it is important to look after your mental health and that talking to someone can help. Pupils feel happy and safe in school. Although a small minority of parents responding to the Parent View survey expressed some concerns, the vast majority of parents agree. As one parent said, 'The teachers have all been caring and genuinely interested in my son's welfare and development.'

### **Inspection findings**

- During this visit, as well as evaluating safeguarding arrangements, I focused on specific aspects of the school's provision including:
  - how effectively governors monitor the work of the school and hold leaders to account
  - the quality of teaching, learning and assessment in writing and mathematics
  - pupils' reading skills in early years and key stage 1
  - the progress made by disadvantaged pupils.
- You were disappointed by the progress pupils made last year in writing and have successfully addressed this. Pupils, including in The Harbour, value the way the

new teaching approaches you have introduced help them to be clear about how they can improve their writing, while boosting their confidence to write. You have ensured that teachers' expectations for pupils' spelling, punctuation and grammar are similarly high across the whole curriculum. Sensibly, you have also made sure that teachers check the accuracy of their assessment of pupils' progress. As a result, the school's information shows that current pupils are making rapid progress in writing, with increased proportions on track to achieve the standard expected for their age. You acknowledge that teachers should now make sure that more pupils achieve the greater depth standard at key stage 1 and the high standard at key stage 2.

- Pupils' progress in mathematics has varied since the last inspection. Last year, pupils in Year 6 had made much less progress during key stage 2 than pupils nationally. This year, mathematics teaching has improved as a result of the training you have coordinated for teachers and teaching assistants. Teachers now ensure that pupils understand concepts thoroughly before moving on to the next topic and, helpfully, provide pupils with greater opportunities to practise problem-solving. This includes in the early years. Teaching assistants support pupils in developing their mathematics skills more precisely than in the past, particularly when supporting pupils who have special educational needs and/or disabilities and those who are disadvantaged. As a result, pupils are making faster progress in mathematics and increasing proportions are achieving well in all year groups. You are rightly prioritising increasing the proportion of pupils who achieve the greater depth standard at key stage 1 and the high standard at key stage 2.
- Most children start at the school with skills and understanding below or significantly below those which are seen typically, particularly in writing. You have adapted the early years environment in relevant ways to promote children's early writing development effectively. As a result, the proportion of children achieving a good level of development has improved steadily since the last inspection, with current proportions in line with national averages.
- This year you have made sure that children in the early years embed their phonics skills more thoroughly than they have in the past. Helpful additional training for teachers and teaching assistants has enabled effective specific support for pupils who need extra help to securely master their phonics skills. Consequently, more pupils than previously are reaching the standard expected in the Year 1 national phonics check.
- School information shows that many disadvantaged children start school with skills and understanding below those of other children nationally. You showed me compelling evidence that as these pupils move up the school they make increasingly rapid progress. These pupils benefit from the wider improvements to teaching in writing, mathematics and phonics, supported further by the high levels of additional care and support provided by staff. Adults know these individual pupils' needs especially well and targeted extra teaching is planned carefully to address any gaps in their knowledge, skills or understanding. As a result, differences between the progress of disadvantaged pupils and other pupils nationally are diminishing.
- Governors are committed to the continuing improvement of the school. At times,

governors rely on you to guide their work and do not check reliably that all the school's policies and procedures are up to date and evaluated thoroughly. The governing body is taking relevant action to ensure that governors monitor the work of the school more effectively and recognise this needs to develop further.

### **Next steps for the school**

Leaders and those responsible for governance should ensure that:

- an increased proportion of pupils achieve greater depth at key stage 1 and the high standard at key stage 2, in writing and mathematics
- more rigorous monitoring of the schools' work enables governors to provide more effective challenge and support to leaders.

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

Yours sincerely

Catherine Old  
**Her Majesty's Inspector**

### **Information about the inspection**

I observed learning with you across the school. I met with you and your senior team to discuss your evaluation of the school's effectiveness and to examine pupils' work. I scrutinised a range of documents, including information about teachers' performance management, governing body reports and records of leaders' checks on teaching. I met with teachers, governors and a representative from the local authority. I spoke to pupils both in class and at playtime. I took account of the 89 responses to Parent View, Ofsted's online survey, and the 39 responses to Ofsted's confidential staff survey. I spoke to several parents informally and considered 87 free-text responses submitted by parents via Parent View.