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Jake Daykin
Headteacher
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Dear Mr Daykin

Short inspection of Hooe Primary Academy

Following my visit to the school on 23 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 inspection carried out since the school was judged to be good in July 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 provide the school with strong leadership and a determined drive for continuous improvement. Since the last inspection many changes have taken place, including the school becoming a founder member of the Horizon multi-academy trust. However, you have not been distracted from the core purpose of your work and have steered the school through this period of transition well. This included a period of significant change in staff, including the forming of a new leadership team and a change of deputy headteacher. You and your leaders have successfully galvanised a strong team that is working effectively to continue to improve the school further. An ethos of teachers working cohesively permeates the school and morale is high. Staff who responded to Ofsted's online questionnaire are united in their determination to ensure the very best for pupils.

In my meetings with pupils and visits to lessons, pupils were very positive about their school and showed exceptional attitudes to school life. They enjoy very good relationships with each other and staff and they value the teaching and the wider opportunities the school provides. Pupils of all abilities agree that their work has become more challenging and appreciate the range of enrichment activities provided for them.

At the last inspection, you were charged with ensuring that the work planned for

pupils is more challenging. You swiftly set to work on addressing the areas needing improvement and they have been tackled well. Particularly impressive is the improved progress in writing of the most able pupils by the end of key stage 2, where work is planned to challenge pupils well. Pupils' achievement has risen because you and your leaders' actions identified exactly what it was that prevented pupils from achieving their very best, made the necessary changes and eradicated most of those barriers. You were also tasked with improving attendance rates, and actions taken to address this aspect have also been successful.

Governors share the same determined drive and ambition of the senior leaders to continue to improve the school. They are very aware of the school's strengths and of areas that need further development. They use their wide range of expertise to work closely with staff and leaders to ensure that the school's strategic ambitions are achieved. Governors use their insightful knowledge, backed up by their visits to the school, to challenge leaders and make well-informed decisions.

Most parents are very positive about the school and would highly recommend it to others. Comments from parents I spoke with at the start of the day were typically positive, such as 'Hooe Primary is amazing', although a proportion of parents did feel that the school could improve communication further, particularly for working families. This view was also echoed by a small selection of parents who used the Parent View free-text option. Furthermore, the school website is missing some statutory information for parents.

Pupils join the school with standards that are typically below those expected for their age. At the end of key stage 2, standards in reading and mathematics remain above the national average, and writing is in line. However, in your accurate self-evaluation you recognised that the progress being made by a small number of pupils in writing in key stage 1 was not good enough. These pupils included disadvantaged pupils and some who have special educational needs and/or disabilities with average starting points.

Safeguarding is effective.

Your safeguarding arrangements are fit for purpose and records are detailed and of high quality. You have provided staff and governors with a comprehensive training programme. As a result, staff are knowledgeable of potential warning signs and act to keep children safe. Staff I spoke to knew what to do should any incident or concern related to safeguarding come to their attention.

You and your staff have created an environment in which pupils feel safe at school and their parents agree. Pupils vividly recall the assemblies that you lead to provide advice and guidance about potential threats and risks to their safety. They could tell me with confidence how to keep safe in and outside of school, and what actions to take if they did not feel safe. They are also very confident that they will be helped if they report any concern, because they say they have 'trusting relationships'.

Furthermore, pupils were very keen to tell me about the 'Life Caravan' and how this

has helped them to understand mental health issues, the importance of keeping healthy and the dangers of alcohol and drug abuse. They said this prepares them well for the realities beyond school. Pupils were also able to explain the difference between bullying and falling-out and were adamant that bullying rarely happens at Hooe Primary Academy. They are aware that a major risk that pupils face is from the internet and social media and were able to tell me how to keep themselves safe online and how to respond to any concerns they may have.

Inspection findings

- My first line of enquiry was to explore the actions taken by leaders to reverse the declining trend in outcomes in the early years, particularly for boys. The recently appointed early years lead has made significant headway in turning fortunes around for all children, but particularly in improving achievement for boys. She has a relentless focus on raising standards and knows every child's strengths and weaknesses. This has enabled her to take early action to ensure that every child makes positive progress. Particularly impressive was the language being used by the children to increase their writing development. For example, a group of boys were observed attempting to write more challenging words than expected for their age, such as the word 'caterpillar'. Deliberate actions have been swift and incisive to raise achievement. Consequently, assessment information and children's work show that children are now on track to achieve much stronger outcomes than historically and the differences between girls and boys have diminished.
- Another key line of enquiry concerned the quality of teaching in writing across key stage 1, particularly for disadvantaged pupils and girls who were working at the expected level at the end of the Reception Year. School leaders rightly identified this as an area for improvement. Pupils' attainment in writing in key stage 1 was around the national average overall in 2016. However, girls and disadvantaged pupils from average starting points were not achieving as well as they should have been. You and your leaders dedicated school resources for focused improvement and your actions have ensured that pupils in Year 3 who did not reach the expected standard in Year 2 have now caught up. Leaders reviewed the approaches to the teaching of writing and made swift changes to the way writing is taught. As a result, the standards of writing in key stage 1 are now high. Although the changes to the approach to teaching writing have had a positive impact for most groups, this is not the case for a small proportion of disadvantaged pupils currently in key stage 1.
- The third key line of enquiry looked at how effective leaders are at ensuring that the most able girls are being challenged to achieve their very best in writing by the end of key stage 2. Again, the changes to the way writing is being taught have had an impact on the most able pupils' outcomes. The work that we reviewed together clearly demonstrated that a larger proportion of girls are on track to attain at a greater depth from their high starting points. Furthermore, wider scrutiny identified that a proportion of middle-ability pupils are also on track to attain the higher standards and this is a significant improvement upon past achievements. A large proportion of pupils' work demonstrates that the more-technical aspects of writing have been secured successfully; consequently,

pupils are achieving the higher standards.

- The fourth line of enquiry evaluated the provision for pupils who have special educational needs and/or disabilities, particularly in writing, by the end of key stage 2. In 2016, pupils made similar and better progress than other pupils nationally in reading and mathematics. However, this was not the case for writing, where pupils made significantly less progress. Since then leaders have taken effective action to address this; robust monitoring of the school's writing interventions has enabled leaders to identify what planned actions are effective in consolidating pupils' understanding. Teachers' plans are evaluated regularly by leaders and resources are adjusted accordingly to ensure that pupils who have special educational needs and/or disabilities make continued positive progress.
- My final line of enquiry was how the wider curriculum meets the needs of all pupils. Leaders ensure that the wider curriculum supports pupils to develop a wide range of skills and gain sufficient knowledge across most subjects. They learn particularly well in religious education, science, history, geography, art, music and design technology. Pupils in Year 6 told me they particularly enjoyed design technology, where they designed and built a shelter that they slept in overnight at school. However, scrutiny of pupils' work in modern foreign languages found that this aspect of the curriculum had not been completed in Year 6. Furthermore, information relating to the Year 6 school's curriculum was missing from the website.

Next steps for the school

Leaders and those responsible for governance should ensure that:

- pupils in Year 6 are provided with the same opportunities as other pupils to thoroughly develop their knowledge and skills in other subjects across the broad curriculum
- all groups of pupils make consistently good progress in writing, particularly at key stage 1
- the school's website is compliant and publishes all required information.

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

Yours sincerely

Matthew Middlemore
Ofsted Inspector

Information about the inspection

During the inspection, I met with you and your senior leadership team. I also met with two governors, including the chair. I met with the chief executive officer from the Horizon multi-academy trust and the person responsible for maintaining safeguarding records. You joined me on visits to most classes and we looked at examples of pupils' work from across the curriculum. I took account of the 39 responses from parents to Ofsted's online questionnaire, Parent View. I also considered the views of parents who talked with me before the school day. I considered the 18 responses to Ofsted's staff questionnaire and spoke to staff during the day. I also met with a group of pupils and took account of the 119 responses to Ofsted's pupil questionnaire. I observed pupils' behaviour in lessons and around school. I also reviewed school documents, including: information about pupils' achievement; school self-evaluation; ongoing strategic developments; information on attendance; and documents relating to safeguarding.