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Mrs Judith Martyn
Headteacher
Highweek Community Primary and Nursery School
Coronation Road
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Devon
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Dear Mrs Martyn

Short inspection of Highweek Community Primary and Nursery School

Following my visit to the school on 27 June 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 December 2012.

This school continues to be good.

The leadership team has maintained the good quality of education in the school since the last inspection. You are providing strong leadership in your determination for continued school improvement. Your evaluation of the school's current performance is robust and accurate. You lead by example and are well supported by a highly committed team of senior leaders who share your passion and drive. You are steadfast in the challenges that you face, drawing on the skills and expertise of colleagues accordingly.

Governors share your high aspirations for what pupils can achieve. They are knowledgeable, well informed and confident in their work. They provide school leaders with an appropriate balance of challenge and support, and regularly check the effectiveness of school improvement initiatives. My conversations with governors revealed a detailed understanding of the school's current actions focusing on raising pupils' achievement in reading and mathematics.

My visit to the early years highlighted children's good levels of interest and engagement in the learning environment. They have a wide range of opportunities to learn and play, both inside and outside. They behave well and interact positively with their peers. Nursery staff are appropriately qualified. Leaders ensure that staffing is at the right level to provide suitable care and supervision.

Pupils are polite, well-mannered and courteous. They readily engaged in conversation with me and articulated their views with confidence and self-

assurance. Almost all staff who responded to the survey said that they enjoy working at this school. They unanimously agree that the school has a culture that encourages calm and orderly conduct, and is aspirational for pupils. These strengths were clearly evident during my visit.

Safeguarding is effective.

You pay meticulous attention to keeping pupils safe. Leaders ensure that all safeguarding arrangements are fit for purpose and that action is taken to safeguard pupils. Rigorous systems are in place to ensure that staff and other adults who are involved in the school are suitable to work with children. For example, safer recruitment practices explore candidates' suitability to work with pupils when references are taken up. Robust checks are in place when visitors arrive at the school. They are given clear guidance regarding the school's expectations for keeping pupils safe.

Leaders provide staff with appropriate training to ensure that they are alert to the possible signs of abuse. Most staff have a clear understanding of the school's policies and procedures around safeguarding. However, you acknowledge the need for some support staff to revisit their training on the 'Prevent' duty. Staff use their knowledge of the school's safeguarding systems effectively to ensure that any concerns about pupils' welfare are logged and escalated quickly.

Leaders have a detailed and thorough knowledge and understanding of vulnerable pupils and the complexity of their specific needs. They pass on referrals swiftly to external agencies to ensure that pupils receive appropriate help and support. Leaders routinely review the quality of support provided to pupils and their families to ensure that it is having the desired impact.

My discussions with pupils revealed that they feel safe at school and have a trusted adult whom they can go to with a worry or a concern. Pupils have a good understanding of how to stay safe when using the internet. For example, they know that they should not give out their personal details online or share their passwords with others. Nearly all parents who responded to the parent survey agreed that their child feels safe in school and is well looked after. A typical comment written by a parent was, 'Teaching and support staff always make my children feel important as individuals and support their emotional and learning needs.' Another wrote, 'Teachers genuinely care about the children.'

Part of our discussions around safeguarding focused on pupils' attendance. The most recent published information shows that overall absence is higher than the national average for all pupils. Absence is also above the national average for pupils in significant groups, including those entitled to free school meals and those who have special educational needs and/or disabilities. You have put in place a robust system to monitor pupils' attendance. This is well supported by a range of strategies that reach out to pupils and parents to promote the importance of good attendance. These actions are proving to be successful, as overall attendance for all pupils is now broadly in line with the national average. Furthermore, you are seeing a steady

improvement in the attendance of pupils in significant groups.

Inspection findings

- My first line of enquiry focused on evaluating leaders' actions in ensuring that children entitled to free school meals and those who have special educational needs and/or disabilities make rapid progress in the early years. Leaders have undertaken an in-depth review to identify key barriers to learning. Consequently, they have a clear grasp on where best to focus their efforts and use pupil premium funding. Leaders have rightly identified weaknesses around language and communication which are hindering children's progress. As a result, leaders have put in place precise actions with measurable outcomes which are linked to children's attainment. These actions are yielding positive results, with a greater proportion of children entitled to free school meals now achieving a good level of development.
- My visit to the early years highlighted the positive impact that leaders' actions are having on improving outcomes for children entitled to free school meals and those who have special educational needs and/or disabilities. Children's work and school assessment information show that children in these significant groups are now making better progress over time. For example, my conversations with several children revealed how their language skills are developing. As a result, they are able to express themselves effectively and have the confidence to fully interact with their peers. You recognise the need to further accelerate the progress of children in these significant groups.
- I also focused on evaluating leaders' actions in ensuring that pupils in key stage 1 make strong progress in reading and mathematics. Leaders have implemented a range of well-targeted actions to ensure that pupils make the progress of which they are capable. As a result, pupils who achieved the expected standard in reading at the end of the early years are now making better progress. Pupils who read to me did so with a good degree of fluency and accuracy. They confidently talked about their books and could apply their skills in inference and deduction to predict what might happen next.
- My visits to classrooms showed good evidence of the impact that leaders' strategies are having on raising standards in mathematics. Pupils are demonstrating a secure grasp of the key mathematical knowledge, understanding and skills associated with standards expected of their age. For example, evidence in Year 2 books shows pupils' ability to recall and use multiplication facts with a good degree of accuracy. Pupils' work in Year 1 shows a secure grasp of money and time. However, leaders acknowledge the need to ensure that pupils routinely apply their skills in number through problem-solving activities.
- Next, I evaluated leaders' actions in ensuring that pupils in key stage 2, particularly girls, make strong progress in reading and mathematics. A detailed analysis of pupils' achievement in these subject areas has enabled leaders to identify specific areas for improvement. Leaders' actions have been effective in ensuring that pupils, including girls with low starting points, make strong progress in reading. Pupils who read to me did so with a high degree of fluency, accuracy and understanding. They readily engaged in detailed discussions about

their books, selecting their words carefully when explaining how characters were feeling. Pupils successfully summarised the main ideas drawn from several paragraphs, identifying key details.

- My visits to classrooms showed that pupils are successfully acquiring new mathematical knowledge and understanding, closely related to their different stages of development. Evidence in books shows that pupils, including girls, are successfully using age-appropriate skills in a range of key areas, including the use of formal written methods for calculation. However, the most able pupils who grasp concepts quickly are not being challenged enough. Furthermore, gaps in conceptual knowledge and understanding can go unchecked, slowing progress.

You agree that, in some key stage 2 classes, leaders must act to further diminish differences in reading and mathematics between disadvantaged pupils and other pupils nationally.

- My final line of enquiry evaluated how well leaders and governors are demonstrating the capacity to drive improvement, particularly in engaging parents. You use assessment and monitoring information effectively to identify specific areas that require further improvement. You ensure that objectives for school improvement work are well founded, precise and firmly rooted in improving outcomes for pupils. As a result, decisive action taken by school leaders is ensuring that areas of weakness are being addressed. You are outward thinking in your approach to school improvement, and are adept at selecting strategies and initiatives that best meet the needs of the pupils.
- Governors are well informed about pupil premium spending in the early years through to the end of key stage 2. They challenge and support leaders on pupils' progress and attainment, as evidenced in governor minutes and reports. Governors are proactive in undertaking their own visits to the school that focus on key areas for school improvement. They use this information effectively to check the impact of leaders' work in raising standards.
- My conversations with governors revealed their unwavering commitment to increasing parental engagement in school life. The effectiveness of the school's work in this area was evident on the day of the inspection, with a high number of parents attending an after-school workshop. Furthermore, comments in the parent survey acknowledge how the school is involving them in new initiatives, focusing on improving learning resilience and outcomes for pupils. A typical comment written by a parent is, 'As a result of the school's work, there has been a real change of culture for parents.' Another wrote, 'As a parent, I feel included in school life.'

Next steps for the school

Leaders and those responsible for governance should ensure that:

- Pupils' outcomes in mathematics continue to improve by:
 - ensuring that key stage 1 pupils routinely apply their skills in number through problem-solving
 - teachers move pupils in key stage 2 onto more challenging work in

mathematics, particularly the most able

- teachers swiftly tackle gaps in conceptual knowledge and understanding in mathematics.
- The school's actions further diminish any differences in achievement between disadvantaged pupils and other pupils nationally in reading and mathematics.

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

Yours sincerely

Neil Swait
Ofsted Inspector

Information about the inspection

During this inspection, I spoke to you, members of the senior leadership team, four members of the governing body and pupils from across the school. I made visits to classrooms to observe pupils' learning and to scrutinise their work. I also listened to individual pupils read in Years 2 and 5.

I considered a range of documentary evidence, which included the school's development plans, attendance, monitoring records and safeguarding documentation.

In addition, I took account of 28 responses to the Parent View online survey, 19 responses to the staff survey and 48 responses to the pupil survey.