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24 July 2017

Victoria Kelly  
Headteacher  
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Dear Ms Kelly

### **Short inspection of Hurst Green Primary School**

Following my visit to the school on 13 July 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 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 took up your post in April this year and lost no time in establishing yourself as a knowledgeable headteacher and skilled practitioner. You have successfully maintained a strong team ethos in school where expertise is quickly identified and shared. You set high expectations of staff and pupils. You all work hard to identify any necessary improvement, find solutions to problems and set an ambitious course of action. Pupils' success and well-being lie at the core of all your decisions.

Pupils feel happy and safe. Pupils say that school is like a family, 'Teachers look out for us and help us to persevere.' Pupils are proud of the school and openly celebrate the achievements of themselves and others. One member of staff responded to the staff survey by stating, 'I would be honoured to send a child of my own here due to the wonderful learning environment, supportive staff and inspirational vision.' When we visited classrooms together we saw pupils who were genuinely interested in their tasks, confident to seek solutions and eager to meet challenges.

You have continued to focus on the areas for improvement identified at the last inspection in July 2013. Pupils are increasingly responsible for their own learning. They are able to evaluate their own work and that of others because they know exactly what is expected of them and what they must do to succeed. Teachers' helpful prompts enable pupils to think in considerable depth about how they can improve further.

In lessons, staff develop a good balance of explanations, questioning and well-prepared activities. They ensure that pupils have sufficient knowledge and understanding to get on with challenging tasks, investigations or practise essential skills. Teachers prepare exciting and engaging activities to inspire pupils and 'hook' them in to learning. Teachers know pupil's individual abilities and amend prepared tasks, expectations and challenge so that pupils can respond thoughtfully and successfully.

In 2016 disadvantaged pupils did not achieve as well as other pupils nationally across a range of subjects. You and school leaders took decisive action to put this right in the current year. Similarly, you tackled the lack of progress of children in the early years. There have been swift improvements but this is ongoing work. Inspectors identified that systems to measure and track pupils' progress required more precision. The assistant headteacher had seized the opportunity of the introduction of the new national curriculum to develop a method of recording teachers' assessments. The information enables leaders to analyse pupils' progress in all year groups and subjects. There is ample evidence of leaders seeking evidence to plan swift improvements. There is no hint of complacency and no one offers excuses or barriers to success.

### **Safeguarding is effective.**

You, staff and governors are committed to keeping children safe from harm. The deputy headteacher keeps a close scrutiny on procedures to identify and record concerns. She has ensured that all staff and governors are suitably trained and up to date in aspects of children's neglect, abuse and exploitation. Staff are vigilant in their observations of pupils. The system to check in visitors is thorough and well understood by pupils. They feel safe in school and have a good understanding of how they can contribute to their own safety.

The deputy headteacher keeps detailed records of referrals to outside agencies, the meetings held and the actions taken. Thorough checks are conducted when appointing new staff, governors or volunteers. Regular risk assessments are made on all activities, visits and school premises.

### **Inspection findings**

- Your strong leadership has ensured that disadvantaged pupils are making better progress than in previous years. Individual plans for pupils are developed so that both their potential and learning difficulties are identified. Staff scrutinise evidence of pupils' progress, assess the effectiveness of support and amend wherever necessary. Following training and in-school meetings staff are increasingly confident in providing effective support in class. Staff have recently focused on the most able disadvantaged pupils so more pupils achieve the higher standards appropriate for their age and abilities. The quality of support has improved pupils' rates of progress and differences in outcomes between the disadvantaged pupils and other pupils nationally are steadily reducing. This year the proportion of disadvantaged pupils in Year 6 who met the expected standard

in reading, writing and mathematics exceeded other pupils nationally in 2016. A higher than national proportion of disadvantaged Year 6 pupils achieved the standard of greater depth in mathematics.

- The proportion of children in Reception achieving a good level of development was below average in 2017. Your expertise and high expectations of provision in early years led to swift changes in how children were taught. You ensured that planned activities assured children's development rather than merely passing the time. You taught alongside staff, provided training and kept children's progress under close scrutiny. You correctly identified that reading and writing were specific weaknesses. Staff quickly took up the challenge, changed how rooms were laid out and planned purposeful activities to develop children's knowledge and skills. As a result, the pace of children's learning has improved. These new approaches are at an early stage of implementation and staff are poised to take the fresh ideas and embed them further with the new Reception intake in September.
- Standards at the end of key stage 1 remain below the national average in 2017. You quickly identified that teachers did not have an accurate understanding of what was expected of pupils in individual subjects. As a result, pupils did not attain the standards expected for their age. You provided clear targets and helped raise staff's awareness of appropriate expectations in each subject.
- Subject leaders provided training to ensure that the correct balance of subject elements were taught, learned and developed, for example problem-solving and reasoning in mathematics. Key stage 1 staff are more suitably aware of end-of-year targets and how they might be achieved. Initiatives for improvement are recent and not yet embedded into everyday practice.
- You identified that pupils' achievement in reading was weaker than in other subjects. You provided training for staff and leaders ran workshops for parents. You and staff reviewed how reading was taught, agreed which approaches were effective and invited pupils to contribute their opinions. You are in the process of banding all reading books so they are suitable for specific ages and abilities. New approaches are at an early stage of development but staff and pupils are committed to ongoing improvements.
- Standards at the end of key stage 2 this year are above the national average in each subject. Following last year's results, leaders and staff rightly concentrated on pupils' writing skills and considered how their teaching could improve. Teachers now plan the incremental skills required for the range of writing purposes. Staff carefully analyse the strengths and weaknesses of pupils' written work and teach the necessary skills. Teachers provide clear expectations for pupils. As a result, pupils are able to accurately evaluate their own work and that of their classmates. Pupils are proud of their improvements and they have a keen sense of responsibility in reducing errors and applying what they have learned to different writing requirements. Significant improvements were evident in the key stage 2 assessments and tests this year in writing and English grammar, punctuation and spelling.

## **Next steps for the school**

Leaders and those responsible for governance should ensure that:

- the teaching in the early years results in improvement in the proportion of children achieving a good level of development by the end of the Reception Year
- key stage 1 staff further develop and plan pupils' learning, to better achieve the end-of-year age-related expectations in each subject
- recent improvements in the teaching of reading are further developed and embedded.

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

Yours sincerely

Deana Holdaway  
**Her Majesty's Inspector**

## **Information about the inspection**

During the inspection I met with you, the deputy and assistant headteachers, the subject leaders for the pupil premium, English and mathematics. I also discussed the school with the pupils and met with the chair of the governing body and four governor representatives. I looked at the responses from the staff and pupil surveys. I considered the school's self-evaluation and plans for development. I took into account standards of attainment for 2016 and 2017. I read a range of school policies, including those for safeguarding and child protection. I also looked at documents regarding the performance management of staff and pupils' behaviour records.