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Mr Tony Markham
Headteacher
Herne Junior School
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Dear Mr Markham

Short inspection of Herne Junior School

Following my visit to the school on 18 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 January 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 have developed a skilled and cohesive leadership team who are driving significant improvements to the school. You deploy teachers with particular strengths effectively to coach others and improve their performance. As a result, the quality of teaching, learning and assessment is consistently high.

Your ethos of 'knowing every child, inspiring every mind' embodies the culture of the school. Relationships between staff, pupils and parents are exceptionally strong. Pupils understand the school 'harmony' values and explain that 'they help us to behave in the right way and be the best we can be'. Behaviour is excellent and pupils show great respect for all members of the school community.

Leaders and governors evaluate the school's effectiveness accurately. Information about pupils' performance and the quality of teaching, learning and assessment is collected and analysed adeptly by the leadership team. The governing body is highly able and poses challenging questions about how you will improve the school further. For instance, governors recently asked you to liaise with the local NHS trust to ensure that pupils' medical needs are met more effectively. The governors know the school well and possess the skills and understanding to challenge the few remaining areas of weakness.

Pupils enjoy school and attend regularly. On the playground, they play well and

enjoy each other's company. The recent addition of the outdoor gymnasium offers pupils great opportunities to keep fit and have fun. Pupils show respect for adults in school, listen attentively and work hard in class. For instance, Year 3 pupils worked diligently to solve challenging problems in mathematics, carefully adding and analysing consecutive numbers and identifying patterns. You have rightly identified that, in some mathematics classes, the level of challenge is not sufficient, and have taken appropriate action to address this.

The curriculum is broad and interesting. Pupils receive ample opportunity to enhance their understanding of physical education, the arts and humanities subjects. Provision for extra-curricular sport is particularly strong. Pupils compete in a wide range of activities, such as basketball, football and rugby. In music, Year 5 pupils listened to Holst's Planets opus 32 and wrote detailed descriptions of what instruments they could hear and described how the music made them feel. Pupils across the school make good progress in all curriculum areas. Nevertheless, the rate of progress for the most able disadvantaged pupils is not as rapid as that made by others in school.

At the time of the last inspection, you were asked to accelerate pupils' progress in reading, improve teaching assistants' questioning skills, and ensure that teachers supported pupils who have special educational needs and/or disabilities more effectively. Leaders have reviewed and improved the reading curriculum and provide useful support to families to promote a culture of reading at home. Teachers read regularly with pupils, ask them to interpret information in books and think deeply about the meaning of texts. As a result, pupils' achievement in reading is now significantly above that seen nationally. Teaching assistants use pertinent questions to assess pupils' understanding. Teachers and support staff communicate well and offer pupils additional support or challenge in class when required. Teachers work closely with the assistant headteacher to identify and support pupils who have special educational needs and/or disabilities. Additional training for teachers has led to greater levels of support in class for these pupils.

Safeguarding is effective.

The leadership team has ensured that all safeguarding arrangements are fit for purpose, and records are detailed and of high quality. You complete statutory checks on all staff before they commence employment. Governors, trained in safer recruitment practices, carefully monitor staff files and school records to ensure that the appropriate checks are made.

Staff receive excellent training and are skilled at identifying and reporting concerns about pupils. Leaders work effectively with external agencies to keep pupils safe. Records are detailed and you monitor the emerging concerns carefully to identify patterns. As a result, leaders have a clear understanding of pupils' well-being needs and take effective action to keep them safe.

Pupils learn how to keep themselves safe. For example, pupils in Year 5 explained how to stay safe on the road by wearing a cycle helmet and observing the highway

code. Pupils know that they can talk to adults in school about their worries and concerns, and understand how to manage risk.

Inspection findings

- At the start of the inspection we agreed to look at the effectiveness of safeguarding; the progress of pupils, including disadvantaged and the most able disadvantaged, in mathematics and writing; the quality of teaching and support for pupils who have special educational needs and/or disabilities and how effectively leaders monitor and improve the curriculum.
- Standards of writing in English, science and the foundation subjects are consistently high. Pupils write for a range of purposes and use their understanding of spelling, grammar and punctuation to construct lively and interesting pieces. For example, pupils in Year 4 wrote persuasive texts that successfully argued who they believe should succeed King Edward the Confessor. Pupils, including those who are lower- and middle-attaining disadvantaged, make strong progress in writing.
- Pupils across the school possess excellent calculation skills. Increasingly, pupils use these skills to solve complex problems. Consequently, pupils make rapid and sustained progress in mathematics. Nevertheless, the level of challenge for the most able is not consistently high.
- The assistant headteacher is highly skilled and provides excellent support for pupils who have special educational needs and/or disabilities. She works effectively with staff, parents and external agencies to identify pupils' needs and provide them with the right level of assistance. As a result, pupils who have special educational needs and/or disabilities make good progress from their starting points.
- Actions to develop the curriculum are effective. Leaders work closely with teachers to plan a lively and interesting curriculum. For instance, pupils used their computing skills to create videos that explained the school values. Leaders at all levels provide meaningful support for teachers to improve their knowledge of subjects such as French and religious education. Teachers regularly observe each other and share best practice. Consequently, the quality of teaching and rates of pupils' progress in the foundation subjects are high.

Next steps for the school

Leaders and those responsible for governance should ensure that:

- the progress of the most able disadvantaged pupils accelerates
- they continue with the drive to ensure that pupils are given consistently challenging work in 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 Hampshire. This letter will be published on the Ofsted website.

Yours sincerely

Dan Lambert
Her Majesty's Inspector

Information about the inspection

I met with you, school leaders and five governors including the chair of the governing body. I observed learning in four classes. I analysed a range of school documentation, including information about pupils' achievement, the school improvement plan and safeguarding checks, policies and procedures. We discussed your own evaluation of the school's effectiveness. I considered the 143 responses to Ofsted's online survey, Parent View, and spoke to parents at the beginning of the day. Some parents offered written responses, which I also considered. I analysed the results of the confidential staff and pupil surveys. I met with pupils from Years 3 to 6. I gathered the views of other pupils throughout the day.