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Mrs Janice Smith
Headteacher
Hertford Heath Primary and Nursery School
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Dear Mrs Smith

Short inspection of Hertford Heath Primary and Nursery School

Following my visit to the school on 12 September 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 May 2013.

This school continues to be good.

The leadership team has maintained the good quality of education in the school since the last inspection.

Your strong, effective leadership has ensured that the school continues to go from strength to strength. You have nurtured an effective teaching and support team who all value your effective leadership and support. This is confirmed in the staff responses to the Ofsted online staff questionnaire.

Hertford Heath is a very happy, caring school. Children and pupils love learning and approach their work with keenness and enthusiasm. This is because you and your team know each and every child and pupil well. You look after them and ensure that they access exciting, valuable academic and personal experiences that serve to shape and influence their future lives. This includes ensuring that pupils enjoy the wide range of clubs, educational visits and opportunities that enrich their learning at Hertford Heath.

The school is bright and welcoming. Displays around the school, even at this early stage in the new academic year, support learning in a variety of subjects through your chosen curriculum topics and celebrate pupils' achievements. Evidence from lessons and pupils' books, including those from the previous academic year, shows that activities are flexibly adapted to meet the differing needs of pupils. They are

set appropriately for the age of the pupils, are purposeful and include opportunities to challenge the most able pupils.

Teaching is effective across the school and staff are helped to improve further through in-class support and the sharing of effective practice. Teachers access high-quality training and support from their school colleagues, the local school networks and the local authority.

Governors monitor, support and challenge leaders' work well. They have a sound knowledge and clear understanding of what the school is doing well and what the next steps are to continue to consistently raise standards. Governors visit regularly and focus sharply on how leaders' actions are making a difference. In particular, governors ask searching questions of school leaders about pupils' achievement.

The previous inspection requested that the school strengthen the role of subject leaders. While leaders have had varying impact according to their experience and the length of time in their role, it is clear that you and the governors hold all leaders equally to account, while giving them the support they require to be fully effective. You lead by example and give all leaders the opportunity to excel. Each leader knows the strengths and areas for development within their subject, devising an action plan to help bring about improvements. Furthermore, all leaders are clear about what is expected, monitor effectively and work hard to ensure that they are contributing to continued school improvement.

You and the governing body evaluate the school's effectiveness accurately, and use this information to set appropriate priorities to secure better provision for all children and pupils. Consequently, improvement has been sustained since the previous inspection.

Safeguarding is effective.

You ensure that there is a strong safeguarding culture evident throughout the school. Safeguarding arrangements are fit for purpose and records are detailed and of high quality. The caring and attentive ethos that runs through the school, and the trust that pupils have in all staff, ensures that pupils are safe and always feel secure.

Pupils are very confident in discussing any concerns that they have with any adult in the school. An appropriate curriculum ensures that children and pupils develop the ability to keep themselves safe. They talk with confidence about how to stay safe when accessing the internet.

All staff and governors receive up-to-date training that enables them to understand their responsibilities with regard to keeping pupils safe. Leaders also ensure that checks are made on staff, governors, volunteers and regular visitors to the school to make sure that they are suitable people to work with children. Staff are clear about what they should do if they have any concerns. They do this fastidiously. You and your team build effective, positive relationships with families, and this is a real

strength in the school's provision. This ensures that you and your team are well placed to deal with any difficulties or concerns quickly and effectively.

Pupils say that they feel safe at school. This is confirmed by the majority of parents, both in the school's parental survey undertaken in January 2017 and in the parental responses to Ofsted's online questionnaire.

Inspection findings

- The first line of enquiry was to look at pupils' achievement in writing. At the previous inspection, you were asked to improve pupils' progress in writing by providing pupils with the opportunity to write at length and across the wider curriculum. Additionally, achievement in 2016 writing outcomes in key stage 1 was below the national average.
- You, along with your leadership team, provide support and training for all teachers and teaching assistants. This support is establishing a more consistent approach to the teaching of writing across all classes, starting in Nursery, and in developing pupils' own editing skills. This is having a notable impact on pupils' achievement, especially in key stage 1, with standards rising in the past year.
- Additionally, our scrutiny of children's and pupils' writing from the previous academic year shows that they are being given much more opportunity to work on their own and, consequently, are more able to demonstrate what they can do.
- You acknowledged that your work to improve outcomes in writing, while showing clear indications of impact this year, need to be further embedded to ensure that all pupils in all key stages consistently attain well in writing, and develop skills in the wider curriculum more regularly.
- Another focus for this inspection was considering how well leaders are ensuring that a higher proportion of teaching and learning is outstanding. This was an area for improvement following the previous inspection.
- Leaders' precise monitoring shows that you all keep a very close eye on the performance of your teachers. Where there are strengths, you have established a culture of sharing the good practice to support others.
- While you offer effective support to teachers, including those newer to the profession, you are also unwavering about what your expectations are for the quality of teaching and learning. Although there have been numerous staffing changes since the previous inspection, you have continued to maintain high expectations, offered various training opportunities and, through rigorous staff appraisal, held all teachers to account for pupils' progress. Teachers understand the expectations and share your view that only the best is good enough for the children and pupils.
- As well as strong, effective teachers, your team consists of a robust, well-trained support team. Most notably, your teaching assistant team provides high-quality support for pupils' learning. You have successfully nurtured staff and developed them, in many cases beyond their roles. For example, some teaching assistants

are carrying out effective subject leadership roles as part of their responsibilities at Hertford Heath.

- A further line of enquiry considered how leaders are making sure that pupils achieve well at key stage 1. This was because, in 2016 outcomes, key stage 1 pupils did not attain as well as is typical for their age in reading and writing.
- You and other leaders acted decisively when the key stage 1 outcomes were not as strong as you had hoped, particularly in reading and writing. Although some pupils did not attain the national average, evidence looked at during this inspection showed that the progress they made from their starting points was good last year.
- Leaders identified that the new, more challenging curriculum was an aspect to focus upon. You ensure that all pupils' needs are assessed so that support is given to quicken their progress. This is ensuring that pupils meet the increased expectations. Consequently, more recent and current assessment information demonstrates that pupils are making more rapid progress and, therefore, attaining better.
- Furthermore, there is a significant improvement in the outcomes for both reading and writing in key stage 1 in 2017 and they are now likely to be at least in line with the national average.
- Another aspect I focused on during this inspection was looking at how leaders are ensuring that pupils who have special educational needs and/or disabilities achieve well. This was because, previously, there had been some variation and inconsistency in the attainment of pupils who have special educational needs and/or disabilities.
- The special educational needs coordinator is meticulous and astute in identifying pupils' needs and securing appropriate interventions. The support is flexible, well planned and routinely responds to pupils' developmental requirements, including their social and emotional needs. The special educational needs coordinator focuses on early intervention so that all children and pupils are 'safety netted' throughout the school – this ensures that no child's or pupil's needs are neglected.
- Leaders are working effectively with staff, governors and families to make sure that they regularly review and adapt the assessment systems for pupils who have special educational needs and/or disabilities. Pupils each have targeted 'pupil plans' and both pupils and their parents are included in regular reviews of progress towards targets. Leaders are ensuring that the progress these pupils make, both academically and socially, personally and emotionally, is celebrated and recognised as contributing towards their overall achievement
- Leaders spend the funding they receive effectively, linking it to both the academic and personal successes pupils achieve. Leaders routinely review the deployment of staff across the school to check that they are being used to maximum effect.

Next steps for the school

Leaders and those responsible for governance should ensure that:

- They continue their actions to embed the improvements in writing so that pupils' attainment in writing is consistently good in all key stages, and fully developed across the wider curriculum.

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

Yours sincerely

Tracy Fielding
Her Majesty's Inspector

Information about the inspection

During this short inspection we visited all classes together. I reviewed some pupils' writing from the previous academic year to consider the standard of work and the progress being made in writing and across other subjects, and I talked to pupils about their work.

I held meetings with you, the deputy headteacher, the key stage 1 and early years leaders and the special educational needs coordinator to discuss their leadership roles and impact on school improvement. I also met with the leaders of English, physical education and music. I held a meeting with five members of the governing body, including the chair of governors, and had a telephone conversation with the former representative of the local authority. I also met with a group of pupils to discuss safety, behaviour and their school experiences.

I reviewed the school's website and a range of school documentation, including policies, current assessment information, your school development plan and school self-evaluation, as well as safeguarding procedures and systems. I took into account 60 parent responses to the Ofsted online survey, Parent View, as well as the school's own parent and pupil surveys. I also included 15 staff responses to the online questionnaire in the inspection evidence information.