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Mrs Deborah Willans
Headteacher
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Dear Mrs Willans

Short inspection of Husborne Crawley Lower School

Following my visit to the school on 31 October 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 September 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 know the school well and you have sustained high-quality leadership and a purposeful culture of continual improvement since becoming headteacher. The change in leadership has been effectively planned, and you have maintained the school's ethos as a caring community, where pupils are happy and able to achieve high standards in their learning. One parent said, 'The school not only takes care of the academic development of our children but also their emotional development to become well-rounded adults.' Governors share your ambition for the school and a recent review of governance has given them a clear understanding of their strengths and how to carry on giving effective support and challenge. Governors ensure that school funds are used well, including additional finance to support disadvantaged pupils and to improve pupils' health and well-being through sports. You have been appropriately supported by the governing body to properly secure new initiatives.

Pupils are known as individuals and all adults go out of their way to make sure that they are able to flourish in school. For example, pupils who are new to English are fully integrated into learning and the school community through the use of translation and well-adapted teaching. Children quickly settle into the early years with a typical range of skills. Parents talk about how the school carefully and patiently develops pupils' independence socially and in learning from their start in

the school. Pupils are well supported to become confident individuals who are ready to move on to their next stage in learning, either within the school or to their next school.

Support for families is a strength of your school. One parent of a new pupil shared how the school had been willing to spend 'hours' helping her when she moved into the area. You have 'gone the extra mile' to support vulnerable parents by helping them to gain access to services. A parent said, 'The assistance our family has had is incredible.' This has supported pupils to be more ready to learn.

You have made sure that there are high expectations of behaviour. This is modelled well by the way staff interact with pupils and each other throughout the school. As a result, pupils are courteous and have excellent manners. Any behaviour incidents are dealt with appropriately. One parent described it as a 'zero tolerance' approach. You make sure that developing pupils' social and emotional skills is a high priority. Pupils are well prepared for life in modern Britain through the teaching of fundamental British values. Pupils of all ages can competently talk about these values and how they put them into practice. For example, during the school's recent 150th anniversary celebrations, pupils entertained local community members in an afternoon tea.

As well as creating a nurturing environment, you expect high standards in what pupils can achieve throughout the school and across the curriculum. You have set up comprehensive and accurate monitoring of the outcomes pupils achieve in their learning, but you carefully consider how you can further improve the school's knowledge of its pupils. For example, you have recently recognised that you need to refine the system designed to help teachers to discover small gaps in pupils' knowledge and skills. Pupils reported that homework helps them to improve.

You have created a vibrant and stimulating learning environment. Every space is used as effectively as possible to nurture pupils' well-being alongside their learning. The new 'learning loft' has provided a well-used additional learning space and nurture corner. The use of 'animal areas' in each classroom successfully supports pupils both to care for others and to maintain a calm learning atmosphere. A parent explained, 'The school has nurtured my child from his anxieties and made him more independent.' The outside learning environment is used creatively and productively for play and curriculum learning. For example, the allotment was successfully used to support topic work by becoming a Second World War vegetable garden.

Safeguarding is effective.

Pupils and parents agreed that Husborne Crawley Lower School is a safe place in which to learn. You, your staff and governors have ensured that safeguarding arrangements meet statutory requirements and that your safeguarding procedures are well understood by pupils, parents and staff.

Pupils say that they feel safe and happy in school. They are confident about speaking with an adult in school if they have any worries. They value the close

community feeling in their school, where everyone knows and takes care of each other across all ages. A parent shared how attentive teachers are and that 'it is almost like a family'.

Pupils know what bullying is and say that they know that they 'will not be allowed to bully'. If it did occur, they know what to do and think that staff would act quickly and effectively to stop it. Parents agreed with this. One parent said, 'Teachers deal with things head on in a positive light and lead by example to the children.' Pupils are encouraged to interact across all age groups at lunchtimes and in shared activities.

Pupils understand how to stay safe when using the internet in school and at home. They are confident in knowing what to do if someone unknown tries to make contact with them online. Online safety is a high priority of leaders.

Staff are trained in relevant aspects of safeguarding, including the government's 'Prevent' duty. They know what action to take if they have concerns about the well-being of a child and all staff actively contribute to safeguarding. This was demonstrated during a recent 'lockdown' when a parent volunteering in school explained, 'The atmosphere was so calm that children did not know what was going on.'

Leaders, including governors, ensure that appropriate checks are carried out on adults working at the school. Records, including those of the actions leaders take when a child is vulnerable or in need of additional support, are securely held and well maintained.

Inspection findings

- To ascertain that the school remains good, I checked that teaching in the early years enables children to progress well in their learning. You have successfully improved outcomes across the majority of the areas of learning. You rightly recognised that children progressed less well in their writing and introduced increased opportunities for writing throughout the school day.
- Children are enthusiastic about the wide range of writing opportunities, such as writing prescriptions in their role-play doctors' surgery and using chalk boards in their outside learning area. This has improved progress in writing. The whole learning environment has been improved and it has many stimulating activities to develop children's skills. For example, children enjoyed growing grass from seeds to use as a habitat for the dinosaurs they were learning about. Children are effectively encouraged to move between free-play activities and guided curriculum tasks, both inside and outside. This enables children to develop a wide range of skills. Children quickly become enthusiastic and independent learners, because staff use every opportunity well.
- I explored if pupils are making good progress in their early reading using phonics. You have successfully focused on supporting pupils as they begin to read by developing a new phonics programme and improving the consistency of teaching approach across the school. Progress in phonics has improved because

you have introduced more rigorous and frequent standardised assessment of what phonics pupils know and can use. Pupils learn more quickly because you have introduced small teaching groups which match their level of phonic skills, and the groups are led well by all adults. Teaching is more targeted to individual pupils' needs and additional support effectively closes gaps in knowledge for those who are at risk of falling behind.

- Children are reminded of their new learning throughout the day. Pupils' use of phonics is supported effectively through homework. Pupils are now progressing well in learning phonics.
- I considered how well pupils are learning across the curriculum, particularly looking at those who are disadvantaged, have special educational needs and/or disabilities and the most able.
- You have increased expectations of what pupils should achieve since you became headteacher. There has been an improvement in pupils' outcomes in reading, writing and mathematics since 2016, so that they are broadly in line with the standards achieved nationally. You have rightly focused on improving the proportion of pupils reaching a higher standard in their learning. Producing greater depth in writing remains a whole-school priority, despite some improvements already being made. You are also beginning to improve spelling through better use of phonics for writing.
- Pupils are learning better in mathematics because the teaching of calculations is more consistent since you introduced a new calculation policy. Pupils learn well across the wider curriculum and are enthusiastic about the topics they study. For example, pupils enjoyed learning about Victorian Britain at the same time as celebrating the school's 150th anniversary. I observed how teachers used topics well to develop pupils' literacy skills at the same time as learning new historical information about street children. However, formal monitoring of progress in learning and the development of specific skills across the wider curriculum are not yet fully developed.
- The small numbers of disadvantaged pupils are effectively supported to succeed in their learning across the curriculum. You have also made sure that there is a good understanding of their barriers to learning. The progress in learning of pupils who have special educational needs and/or disabilities is a strength of the school. Careful identification of pupils' needs and a shared and consistent whole-school approach to strategies used for individual pupils mean that they flourish and are well placed to learn. The caring ethos of the school particularly benefits vulnerable pupils. Interventions are effective because they are chosen to match needs well. You have rightly recognised that you need to refine your system for measuring the small steps of progress these pupils make. The most able pupils learn well because the level of challenge in lessons is high. You have recognised that a high proportion of your pupils are learning above age-related expectations, but as well as this you have appropriately increased the level of challenge in learning for those who are working significantly above this higher level.
- While overall attendance was in line with the national average in 2016, this was not the case for pupils who have special educational needs and/or disabilities. Hence, I followed up what you were doing to improve this. You and the

governing body have been determined to increase attendance by making expectations very clear to pupils, parents and staff through a well-publicised new attendance policy. This includes effective daily monitoring of attendance and timely follow-up to make sure that pupils are safe when they have not attended school.

- Leaders carefully considered the reasons for poor attendance and concluded that some families had taken unauthorised holidays during term time. Your high expectations have been successfully communicated and there has been no long-term absence this year. Some of your pupils have legitimate reasons why they have to miss school, but your sound knowledge of the needs of pupils who have special educational needs and/or disabilities and their families has allowed you to provide individual support. This means that these pupils' attendance is now in line with other pupils and with all pupils nationally.

Next steps for the school

Leaders and those responsible for governance should ensure that:

- the high quality of writing in English lessons is consistently mirrored across the wider curriculum, in handwriting, accuracy and content
- the continued improvement in learning of pupils who have special educational needs and/or disabilities builds on the current strong foundations, and small steps in learning are even more closely monitored
- the teaching of specific skills in the wider curriculum is as well planned as it is in English 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 Central Bedfordshire. This letter will be published on the Ofsted website.

Yours sincerely

Linda Bartlett
Ofsted Inspector

Information about the inspection

During the inspection, I held meetings with you, your office manager and the safeguarding lead of your governing body. I talked with the school improvement partner by telephone. I met a group of 11 pupils chosen by you, and I also spoke with pupils informally in classrooms and when walking around the school. Together, we visited each class to observe pupils as they were learning and to undertake a scrutiny of pupils' work in their books and folders. I visited each class three times across the day. I examined the policies and procedures for safeguarding pupils and the school's record of recruitment checks carried out on staff working at the school.

I also analysed or discussed key documents. These included the school's self-evaluation and improvement planning, information about pupils' achievement, behaviour and attendance, records of the quality of teaching, learning and assessment and minutes of the governing body. I considered the views of nine members of staff and I also took account of the views of the 17 parents who made contact via the Parent View free-text facility. In addition, I took account of the comments of nine parents who spoke with me during the course of the inspection.