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Mr James Lacey
Headteacher
Holly Spring Infant and Nursery School
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Dear Mr Lacey

Short inspection of Holly Spring Infant and Nursery School

Following my visit to the school on 23 January 2018, 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 October 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 lead the school with a high degree of positivity and care. Staff, governors and parents have confidence in your leadership. As one parent wrote: 'The headteacher is visible, involved and clearly cares a great deal for each and every child in the school.' Others used words such as 'inspiring', 'approachable' and 'friendly'.

With your team of dedicated teachers and leaders, you are determined to do the best for pupils. Together, you have created a strong culture among staff who seek to continually improve their professional practice. Teaching is organised, engaging and helps pupils to make strong progress. Parents praise teachers' hard work and dedication. Several commented on the approachability of staff, and that they go out of their way to help pupils and to provide parents with information about how to help their child at home.

Pupils enjoy learning across the whole curriculum. Behaviour is managed well so that this is a calm school with happy and respectful pupils. They work hard, take pride in their learning and complete tasks to a high standard. Pupils think carefully about their work and know to persevere when work is challenging. Teachers use rewards well to praise pupils' achievements.

You, leaders and governors have an accurate view of the school's strengths and areas for further development. Since becoming headteacher, you have improved several aspects of the school and are ambitious for the school to be even better.

Governors are supportive of your work. They know the school well and ensure that leaders focus on the right things to further improve the school. At the last inspection, inspectors asked the school to improve the teaching of phonics and reading. You have responded to this successfully, reorganising how phonics and reading are taught across the whole school and raising expectations of what pupils can achieve. As a result, standards have risen, with a larger proportion of pupils now reaching the standard of the phonics check in Year 1 and going on to achieve expected standards in reading at the end of Year 2.

Pupils join the school with starting points typically below those of other pupils nationally. Your work to ensure that teachers' planning considers pupils' different starting points even more precisely is helping to raise pupils' outcomes. They now leave at the end of key stage 1 having made strong progress to attain standards which are broadly average in reading, writing and mathematics. Over time, the difference between the attainment of disadvantaged pupils and others nationally is diminishing, particularly in reading. You rightly aim for these pupils to match the standards of other pupils nationally. Plans to further develop pupils' communication, language and writing skills throughout the school are well judged.

Safeguarding is effective.

The leadership team has ensured that all safeguarding arrangements are fit for purpose. Staff are well trained and have a thorough understanding of how to spot any potential issues and pass on any concerns. Leaders work proactively with parents and outside agencies to get extra help for those pupils who need it. Pupils say that they feel safe in school and know who to talk to if they have any worries. On the rare occasion pupils fall out, they know an adult will help them sort things out if necessary. Pupils have a good understanding of how to stay safe online.

Inspection findings

- Pupils' progress in phonics has improved. You have achieved this through ensuring that teachers and teaching assistants are well trained in teaching phonics, including in the early years. Teachers have raised their expectations of what pupils can achieve. They group pupils carefully and plan activities which meet their different needs well, so that pupils learn their phonics skills enthusiastically. Additional help for pupils who need it is well thought through. Parents appreciate the advice you provide to enable them to help their children with phonics at home. Consequently, there has been rapid improvement in phonics for all pupils, including disadvantaged pupils.
- Leaders have researched best practice in the teaching of reading, to devise a programme which works well for pupils at Holly Spring. Pupils read regularly both at home and at school, choosing highly interesting, appropriate texts from the restocked library. In lessons, pupils read books which are set at an appropriately challenging level to increase their reading skills. Teachers check their comprehension and encourage pupils to discuss their reading. Pupils spoke with interest about books, appreciating the range of genres they are discovering. One told me that he had enjoyed reading lots of poetry, and another that he liked

non-fiction books because he liked learning about the world. Your new approach has seen pupils' attainment in reading rise to be broadly average, with above-average proportions exceeding the expected standard for their age.

- Most disadvantaged pupils achieve well at Holly Spring. However, their attainment does not match that of others nationally. You recognise this and, as a result, you have reviewed the impact of pupil premium funding to make sure that it is more carefully targeted to support disadvantaged pupils' good progress. You now evaluate the effectiveness of the funding much more closely, altering provision quickly if it is not working well enough for individuals. You have done much to improve communication with parents and provide them with support to help their children at home. In addition, in the early years the regenerated outside area provides more opportunities for children to improve their communication and language skills, for example when role-playing and telling stories on the outdoor stage. Your actions have made a difference, as current disadvantaged pupils are making better progress than in the past, particularly in the early years.
- You identified that boys have not made as much progress as girls in writing, particularly in the early years. To address this, you have revised the curriculum to make it more interesting and enjoyable, and to provide children with a purpose for their writing. For example, when I visited, children were learning about the exciting story of the 'evil pea' who keeps stealing vegetables and hiding them in ice. They used salt water to melt the ice to release the vegetables, and then wrote about what had happened. In the outdoors area, you have provided more opportunities for boys to write as they play, which is helping to increase their stamina in writing.
- Leaders have created a very positive culture among staff. Staff enthusiastically seek to refine and improve their teaching and leadership skills through a well-organised programme of professional development. Staff told me that their mantra of 'working smarter' is helping them to focus on what really works to help pupils the most in their learning. Training for teaching assistants to become skilled in particular teaching methods has had a particularly impressive impact; they feel, and are, valued for the work they do to help individual pupils make better progress. Teachers research new approaches and are encouraged to 'be brave' in their planning. This work is ongoing, but the improvement in standards over the last two years, and your own monitoring records, show that this is working; teachers are planning learning which is much more tailored to pupils' different starting points. As a result, pupils are making more rapid progress than previously, particularly the most able pupils.

Next steps for the school

Leaders and those responsible for governance should ensure that:

- teachers' planning considers pupils' different starting points even more precisely, so that pupils make even better progress, particularly disadvantaged pupils
- teachers continue to refine opportunities throughout the school for pupils, especially boys, to develop their skills in writing, communication and language.

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

Yours sincerely

Catherine Old
Her Majesty's Inspector

Information about the inspection

I met with you, other leaders, governors and a representative from the local authority to discuss the leadership of the school. I observed lessons during three learning walks, all conducted jointly with senior leaders. I looked at work in several books, and discussed pupils' progress and attainment with leaders and pupils. I observed pupils playing outside, spoke to pupils informally and also met with groups of pupils. I took account of 51 survey responses submitted by pupils. Parents' views were taken into account through face-to-face informal discussions before school. I also considered the 125 responses to Ofsted's online survey, Parent View, including 84 free-text comments. I met with a group of staff and took account of 32 survey responses submitted by staff. I scrutinised a variety of school records and documentation relating to safeguarding, attendance, minutes of meetings and monitoring and improvement records. I reviewed the checks made on staff regarding their suitability to work with children.