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Mr Colin Turtle
High Firs Primary School
Court Crescent
Swanley
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Dear Mr Turtle

Short inspection of High Firs Primary School

Following my visit to the school on 1 February 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 July 2014.

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 created an environment which is ambitious for pupils, staff and the wider community. You are a highly reflective practitioner, and have a clear and accurate view of the school's strengths and the areas that require further work. You have focused on developing the capacity and effectiveness of your teaching staff. Staff value the training and guidance they receive and are proud to work at the school.

Relationships between staff and pupils are excellent. Pupils receive high levels of pastoral care which enable them to flourish and learn together. All members of the school's community are committed to living up to the school's vision of 'Achieving more together'.

Pupils are enthusiastic about their learning. They enjoy a broad range of activities and are well behaved in and around the school. They are polite, well-mannered and show respect for each other and for adults. They feel valued and know that every member of staff will listen to them. Pupils describe the school as 'safe, positive and welcoming'.

At the time of the last inspection, inspectors highlighted good teaching, determined leadership and strong spiritual, moral, social and cultural development. These aspects remain highly effective. You were asked to improve outcomes in writing and to ensure that teachers provide pupils with useful advice on how to improve the quality of their work. In lessons, teachers now provide pupils with more opportunities to reflect on their previous learning. As a result, pupils have a clearer view of what they need to do to develop their skills and understanding. In 2017, the

proportion of pupils that achieved the expected standard at the end of key stage 2 was above the national average.

You and your leaders are good at identifying how to increase pupils' progress. Pupils make effective progress in reading, writing and mathematics, but there are inconsistencies in the level of challenge that teachers provide for the most able pupils. You have rightly identified that the teaching of writing needs to be more challenging, and that staff need to have higher expectations of the most able pupils to enable them to make greater progress.

Safeguarding is effective.

Leaders and governors make sure that all safeguarding procedures are fit for purpose. You have created a culture of safeguarding in the school in which pupils' well-being is at the heart of everything you do. A parent summed this up, saying: 'There is a real sense of family and belonging for all children and parents.'

All staff receive timely and good-quality training to ensure that they are confident to apply the school's policies and guidance in relation to child protection issues. Record-keeping is detailed and all actions are followed up meticulously.

Your actions to improve pupils' attendance have been successful. Overall attendance is above the national average. The proportion of pupils who are persistently absent from school has reduced, and is better than the national average. Pupils say they enjoy school because all the teachers are 'friendly, positive and funny'.

Inspection findings

- At the start of the inspection, we agreed to look at: the effectiveness of safeguarding; how you have improved the teaching of writing, especially for the most able boys; the progress of pupils in reading and phonics; and how you have increased the rate of progress for disadvantaged pupils.
- In 2016, the progress of boys in writing by the end of key stage 2 was less than the national average. You instigated a review into these writing outcomes and, as a result, your staff introduced new approaches to enable pupils to make better progress. Leaders introduced a more creative approach to writing using good-quality texts to engage pupils, especially boys. In 2017, the proportion of boys meeting the expected standard improved and was in line with the national average. Leaders are not complacent, however, and realise that some inconsistency remains in the standards of writing achieved by the most able boys. Support and training are now in place, targeted to raise the achievement of the most able boys so that their progress is rapid.
- The teaching of phonics is good. Senior leaders have a clear strategy to ensure that pupils learn phonics effectively. You provide staff with high-quality training to ensure that all pupils benefit from good phonics teaching. Pupils are grouped by attainment to focus the teaching of reading on their individual needs. Leaders make sure that those pupils making slower progress quickly receive support to

help reinforce their understanding. This approach, coupled with teachers' higher expectations, means that pupils are now making better progress.

- Support for disadvantaged pupils in and around the school is effective. You provide high levels of pastoral support to help develop pupils' emotional well-being. Your staff know these pupils well and provide extra support to help these pupils learn well in lessons. Adults' guidance is building pupils' independence, and helping them to become good learners.
- You and your team have worked hard to improve pupils' progress in reading. You have introduced a new system for teachers to evaluate and increase pupils' progress in reading. Where these changes have been implemented effectively, pupils are now making better progress. There has been a sharp increase in the amount of progress that pupils now make from their different starting points. The school recognises that the focus on reading must be continued to ensure sustained progress over time, so that pupils fulfil their potential.

Next steps for the school

Leaders and those responsible for governance should ensure that:

- teachers improve the progress pupils make in writing, particularly the most able boys
- changes in the school's approach to the teaching of reading are fully 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 Kent. This letter will be published on the Ofsted website.

Yours sincerely

David Harris
Ofsted Inspector

Information about the inspection

I met with you, your deputy headteacher and your staff. We talked about the improvements which have been made since the last inspection. Together, we undertook observations of learning in lessons. I examined pupils' work, focusing on writing. I spoke on the telephone to a representative from the local authority. A meeting was held with three governors, including the chair of governors. During this inspection, I examined a variety of documents, including the school's website, published performance data and a summary of your school's self-evaluation document. A range of documentary evidence was evaluated, including documents relating to safeguarding and governance. I took account of 36 responses to Ofsted's online questionnaire, Parent View, including 17 free-text comments. I also considered 14 responses to Ofsted's staff survey and 11 responses to the pupil questionnaire.