

26 February 2018

Miss Natasha Dorrington
Headteacher
Harnham Infants' School
Saxon Road
Salisbury
Wiltshire
SP2 8JZ

Dear Miss Dorrington

Short inspection of Harnham Infant School

Following my visit to the school on 6 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 March 2014.

Based on the evidence gathered during this short inspection, I have identified some priorities for improvement which I advise the school to address. In light of these priorities, the school's next inspection will be a full section 5 inspection. **There is no change to the school's current overall effectiveness grade of good as a result of this inspection.**

Over time, pupils' outcomes by the end of Year 2 have declined. In 2015 and 2016, standards in reading, writing and mathematics were below the national average. In 2017 too few pupils made the same progress as other pupils nationally from their starting points at the end of Reception. Continued uncertainty and instability in staffing since the previous inspection, especially at a leadership level, has adversely affected governors' and senior leaders' attempts to improve the school.

Since your commencement as the full-time headteacher of the school at the beginning of this academic year, you have strengthened the drive and pace of improvement. Your new senior staff, including the deputy headteacher, support you well. Together with governors, you provide effective leadership and have a clear picture of the school's strengths and weaknesses. As a team, you are working well together to implement a development plan that targets the right priorities for improvement. In a short period of time you have restored a positive atmosphere for learning. Good behaviour and pupils' keen endeavour to improve their work is now typical in all classes.

Your actions are also improving pupils' achievement in reading, writing and basic

numeracy at the end of key stage 1. As a result, a much increased proportion of current pupils are on track to reach the standards expected for their age. For example, pupils develop their numeracy skills well in mathematics and show good understanding when writing meaningful sentences. These achievements represent a marked improvement on the previous two years. However, pupils' spelling, reading comprehension and mathematical reasoning skills continue to be weaker aspects. You acknowledge that your current drive to improve these skills needs to be maintained to fully develop these skills. Teachers are increasingly providing a suitable level of challenge in the work they provide for the pupils. You also recognise, however, that this strengthened teaching has not been sustained long enough. Consequently, the issue from the previous inspection to enable the most able pupils reach their full potential has not yet been accomplished.

You are securing greater accuracy of teachers' assessments of pupils' progress. Teachers are using this information more routinely to identify and meet the needs of pupils with different starting points. This is having a positive impact on pupils' achievement. As a result, over the last two terms disadvantaged pupils and those who have special educational needs (SEN) and/or disabilities are being better supported and are accelerating their progress.

Safeguarding is effective.

Leaders have taken rigorous action this academic year to ensure that safeguarding arrangements are fit for purpose and are in line with current legislation. For example, you have responded diligently to a recent safeguarding audit to ensure that systems to vet staff and keep their statutory training up to date function effectively. Leaders make timely referrals and work well with parents, carers and external agencies to support vulnerable pupils and reduce risk of harm.

Staff know what to do and who to contact when they have concerns about a child's welfare. When questioned, staff talk confidently about their detailed knowledge of individual pupils, especially those considered vulnerable. This knowledge ensures that staff 'spot the signs' that a child may be at risk and take swift and appropriate action.

Pupils say, 'We feel safe because our teachers like us and are kind to us.' The overwhelming majority of parents who responded in the online survey expressed the view that their child feels safe at this school. One parent wrote, reflecting the views of most who responded to the questionnaire, 'I love this school. My son has thrived here and it has a lovely sense of community. He leaves every day with a smile and I know he is safe and taught well here.'

Inspection findings

- The inspection evaluated the effectiveness of leaders' actions in raising pupils' achievement by the end of Year 2. This academic year you have strengthened leadership and management. You have been well supported by governors in establishing clear lines of responsibility across all levels of leadership. Senior and

middle leaders now understand their roles and what is expected of them. They know that you and governors will hold them fully to account. As a team, you are targeting relevant areas for improvement effectively. For example, you have raised teachers' expectations of what pupils should achieve. This is evident in the teachers' challenging questioning of pupils and in the pupils' neatly presented work in their books and on display in the classrooms. Your continued improvement of early years provision, a strength of the school, further shows your secure capacity to bring improvement. You rightly recognise that checking the impact of leaders' actions on pupils' progress, especially by some middle leaders, is not yet fully developed.

- Next we examined the quality of teaching, especially teachers' assessment of pupils' developing skills. At the beginning of this academic year you identified that teachers' assessment of pupils' learning too often lacked precision. You ascertained that this impeded teachers from taking prompt action to rectify weaknesses and prevent pupils' progress stalling. Inspection shows that you continue to give this issue high priority.
- You have taken swift action to introduce a new and more effective way of assessing pupils' progress. You have introduced more frequent checks, including for example, reading tests, to assess how teaching is moving pupils' learning forward. Teachers and support staff are meeting more frequently than in the past to examine samples of pupils' work and discuss pupils' progress. This is raising expectations of what pupils should achieve and enabling more teachers to plan suitable work that provides for pupils' next steps in learning. As a result, an increasing number of pupils across the range of ability and starting points, are quickening their progress. You acknowledge however, that some pupils, especially the most able, have not yet made up the lost ground which stemmed from teacher's lower expectations.
- Finally we looked at the use of additional funding to quicken the progress of disadvantaged pupils and those who have SEN and/or disabilities. Together with new leaders you are improving the use of additional funds. As a result of teachers' more effective assessment of pupils' different needs teachers closely target the additional support they provide for them. Currently, for example, disadvantaged pupils in Years 1 and 2 receive additional teaching of writing that is raising their confidence and skills in using grammar and punctuation effectively. Teachers are also providing extra support in and out of class for pupils' social and emotional needs. Consequently, pupils are now starting to make stronger progress.

Next steps for the school

Leaders and those responsible for governance should:

- ensure that teachers sustain the focus on raising pupils' attainment in reading, writing and mathematics at the end of Year 2, in particular, to improve the development of pupils' comprehension, spelling and reasoning skills respectively and especially by the most able pupils

- embed the widened leadership roles so that leaders at all levels, including middle leaders, evaluate the effectiveness of efforts to strengthen teaching and pupils' learning.

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

Yours sincerely

Alexander Baxter
Ofsted Inspector

Information about the inspection

During the inspection, I held meetings with you and the deputy headteacher. I also consulted with the other staff who have leadership responsibilities. I met with governors of the school and visited classrooms with you and the deputy headteacher. I also met with a representative of the local authority. We collected and scrutinised samples of pupils' work in books. I talked with individual pupils and listened to them reading during visits to classrooms. I observed lunchtime arrangements and talked with pupils and support staff. In addition, I examined a range of documents relating to safeguarding, pupils' attendance, pupils' progress and school self-evaluation and development. I took account of 71 responses to the Ofsted online Parent View survey and 71 additional parents' written comments. I also took note of 26 responses to the staff questionnaire.