

Ofsted  
Piccadilly Gate  
Store Street  
Manchester  
M1 2WD

T 0300 123 4234  
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8 March 2018

Mr Richard Haynes  
Headteacher  
Hobbs Hill Wood Primary School  
Peascroft Road  
Hemel Hempstead  
Hertfordshire  
HP3 8ER

Dear Mr Haynes

### **Short inspection of Hobbs Hill Wood Primary School**

Following my visit to the school on 22 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. Pupils benefit from effective teaching in a friendly and supportive atmosphere. Lessons are purposeful, and pupils achieve well. They and parents are very positive about the school and all it has to offer.

You have responded effectively to the recommendations made at the last inspection. Leaders have worked successfully to improve teaching and pupils' achievement in phonics and mathematics. Clearer success measures in the school improvement plan have helped sharpen the way governors hold you to account. We reflected that the plan could be sharpened further still by introducing interim success measures. Improvements have also been made in the early years. Rightly, you recognise the importance of ensuring that leaders' recent initiative to improve the teaching of early writing skills leads to stronger outcomes.

Other key school improvement priorities are well considered. Your drive to increase opportunities for key stage 2 pupils to apply their writing skills is proving effective. Leaders' work to improve the quality of support for disadvantaged pupils and others who need to catch up is well thought through. Leaders and governors recognise that the success of this work is key to helping these pupils make consistently strong progress. You are rightly keen to ensure that the planning and teaching in all subjects is of high quality. The development of assessment in subjects other than English and mathematics is helping leaders to spot gaps in the curriculum and improve the way subjects are taught. You know that further work is needed to secure high achievement across the curriculum.

## **Safeguarding is effective.**

You have made sure that all safeguarding arrangements are fit for purpose. Checks on the suitability of staff are rigorous. A helpful audit last summer revealed that although pupils were safe, some aspects of record-keeping were not tight enough. You quickly rectified the situation. The new leader for safeguarding maintains a clear oversight and high-quality records. Effective training and updates ensure that all staff are clear about their responsibilities and are alert to signs that a pupil might be at risk. Leaders work effectively with other agencies to make sure that suitable support is in place for pupils and their families. Leaders and staff keep a close eye on the progress of vulnerable pupils to make sure that the support these pupils receive is effective.

Pupils are clear that the school is a safe place and that bullying is rare. They report that when bullying does occur it is dealt with effectively. Parents agree. The curriculum helps pupils learn to stay safe in school, in the wider real world and when using the internet or texting.

## **Inspection findings**

- Leaders have successfully improved teaching in mathematics and phonics. In the last three years, pupils' achievement in mathematics by the end of each key stage has been at least in line with that seen nationally. The proportion of pupils reaching the expected standard in phonics in Year 1 has increased notably since 2015. It was above the national figure in 2016 and 2017. Furthermore, last year all pupils had reached the expected standard by the end of Year 2, a significant improvement on previous years.
- Pupils' achievement in writing was not as strong as in reading and mathematics at the end of key stage 2 in 2017. Pupils typically acquired a sound understanding of grammar, spelling and punctuation. However, they were not consistently skilled in applying this in unfamiliar contexts. To overcome this, pupils now have increased opportunities to apply their writing skills and write at length. This is proving effective. Pupils are achieving increasingly well.
- Children in the early years have not made consistently strong progress in recent times. Although there has been some improvement, the proportion of children reaching a good level of development by the end of Reception has remained a little below the national average. Better opportunities for children to develop a concrete understanding of number have helped to improve achievement in numeracy. However, achievement in writing has not improved. Children are now being provided with more opportunities to develop their skills at writing simple sentences. Work in books shows that these are having a positive impact. It is too soon to judge whether this initiative will result in improved outcomes by the end of the summer term.
- Leaders are sharpening their oversight of the use of pupil premium funding. Much clearer information is being presented to the governing body. This is helping governors see the impact of spending and the extent to which it is leading to improved achievement for disadvantaged pupils. School information shows that,

although in the main these pupils make at least reasonable and often good progress, typically they are not making the strong progress needed to catch up from any previous underachievement.

- Leaders have reviewed and tightened the way that support sessions for pupils who need help to keep up with their learning are planned. Staff providing the support are now more clearly briefed on the desired outcome of each session. Leaders' sharper record-keeping and tracking mean that they are better placed than previously to check support is effective. However, it is too early to see the full impact of this new approach.
- Work is well under way to ensure that all subjects are planned and taught consistently effectively. Leaders' development of clear assessment criteria for each subject is providing them with greater insight into the quality of teaching across the curriculum. This process has revealed that some topics were not building on previous learning and some aspects of the curriculum were not covered well enough. In light of this, leaders are reviewing curriculum plans and adjusting teaching. In some subjects, improved draft plans are now in place. Other subjects have further to go. You rightly see completing and embedding this work as a crucial part of securing an outstanding curriculum.

### **Next steps for the school**

Leaders and those responsible for governance should ensure that:

- the support provided for disadvantaged pupils and others, who need help to keep up, enables them to make consistently strong progress
- recently introduced initiatives to improve provision in early years enable children to make increasingly good progress, particularly in writing
- current work to secure effective assessment and further develop planning and monitoring in subjects other than mathematics and English, results in pupils acquiring a high degree of skills, knowledge and understanding across the 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

Diana Choulerton  
**Ofsted Inspector**

### **Information about the inspection**

I met with you and the deputy headteacher at the start of the day. We discussed your evaluation of the school's effectiveness and agreed the key areas we would focus on during the inspection. During the day, I held further discussions with you

and the deputy headteacher. I met with five members of the governing body including the chair and vice-chair. I also met with other leaders and spoke with staff, pupils and parents. I made short visits to lessons, with you and the deputy headteacher, to look at pupils' learning in writing and the wider curriculum. We also jointly scrutinised a selection of pupils' work. I took account of 59 staff survey responses and 159 responses to the pupil survey. I also took account of 114 responses by parents to Ofsted's online questionnaire, Parent View, including 39 free-text responses. I had a short discussion by phone with a representative from the local authority. I analysed a range of the school's documentation, including leaders' checks on pupils' progress, and safeguarding policies and procedures.