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Ms Elaine D'Souza
Headteacher
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Dear Ms D'Souza

Short inspection of Hermitage Primary School

Following my visit to the school on 27 March 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. Since joining the school you have developed and trained a new senior leadership team and established systems and procedures to ensure that expectations in teaching and learning are clear. Your determined leadership has ensured that all share your vision and are equally ambitious for pupils. Together with senior leaders you have created a caring and nurturing environment. Parents and carers are highly supportive of the inclusive community and talk positively about the 'family feel' you have created.

You have tackled the areas identified at the time of the last inspection by developing an efficient assessment system so that teachers are clear about what they need to do to ensure that pupils make progress. Senior leaders now take responsibility for the standards in their phases. The curriculum has been developed to ensure that it is interesting and appealing to pupils. Together with senior leaders you monitor the quality of teaching and learning across the school and deliver training for staff based on your observations. You know where the best practice is and that you need to ensure that this continues to be shared.

Your supportive and effective governing body is rightly very proud of the progress the school has made in recent years. Governors are reflective and strengthen their skills through recruitment and training. They visit the school often and have an accurate understanding of the school's work and areas for development. They value the open and transparent relationship they share with you and the rest of the staff.

Safeguarding is effective.

The leadership team has ensured that all safeguarding arrangements are fit for purpose and that records are detailed and of a high quality. All staff have received the required safeguarding training to support their understanding and knowledge of the government's current statutory guidance. Clear procedures are in place and staff know how to report concerns. Leaders work with a range of other agencies to ensure that pupils are safe and are persistent in ensuring that all referrals and actions are appropriately followed up to achieve this goal.

Pupils know how to keep themselves safe. Leaders have ensured that the curriculum is adapted to meet the age and stage of learners. Pupils' understanding about road safety and how to protect themselves online becomes increasingly sophisticated as they get older. Pupils have a good awareness of different forms of bullying. They know what to do if they experience bullying and are confident to report it to a member of the school staff.

Inspection findings

- The inspection focused on key lines of enquiry. The first was to determine how effectively leaders ensure that improvements made in 2017 are sustained and spread across the school, so all pupils continue to make progress in line with national averages in reading, writing and mathematics. In 2017, more pupils met and exceeded national expectations than in previous years and progress in writing across key stage 2 improved significantly. The school had also identified this as a key priority and were keen to ensure that improvements made could be maintained and further built upon. I found that you have developed senior leaders and responsibility for school improvement is now shared among phase leaders. The assessment policy has been overhauled, staff have received comprehensive training and teacher assessment is accurate. Senior leaders meet regularly with class teachers to check that pupils are making required progress. Subject leaders look at pupils' workbooks to check standards. As a result, gaps in learning are quickly identified. Leaders help teachers modify teaching or put interventions in place to support learning and careful tracking ensures that these actions have a positive impact on pupils' progress and attainment.
- There is a strong focus on phonics, particularly with younger pupils. As a result, reading skills are secure by the end of key stage 1, with older pupils in key stage 2 demonstrating reading strategies confidently across the curriculum. Pupils clearly enjoy reading and read for pleasure, with many of them identifying favourite authors.
- In writing, skills are taught effectively. In some classes, teachers use questioning to encourage pupils to think hard, make good vocabulary choices and compose effective and interesting sentences. As a result, pupils produce high-quality writing and make rapid progress. Work in writing books is of a good standard because pupils take pride in their work. However, teacher expectations are inconsistent in terms of the quality of writing across subjects. Opportunities for

pupils to write at length across the curriculum are limited by the amount of space provided on pre-printed worksheets. Consequently, pupils do not produce writing at the standard of which they are capable in all subjects.

- Leaders have worked hard to diminish differences in pupils' progress in mathematics. They have boosted mental mathematics skills and helped pupils improve their knowledge of multiplication tables. Pupils use mathematical vocabulary well and have opportunities to apply their reasoning both verbally and in writing. Teachers model methods well and use visual images effectively to help pupils understand mathematical concepts. Sometimes most-able pupils spend too long working on things they already know or can easily do. These pupils need more opportunities to move quickly to the next level of challenge so that their rates of progress are not slowed.
- I then looked at how effectively leaders identify the main barriers to learning faced by disadvantaged pupils and how well they use pupil premium funding to ensure that this group of pupils make good progress and achieve outcomes in line with their peers. This was because this has not always been the case in recent years. I found that you know these pupils and their families well. Together with governors you have ensured that the funding is used to support emotional and academic development appropriately. Emotional and social support is a strength and benefits learning outcomes. You are developing a mentor system which is raising the profile of these pupils among staff. This, together with initiatives such as additional learning clubs and target time, is helping to improve pupils' confidence as well as ensuring that pupils have time to improve their skills so they have a firm foundation to build upon in class. You have ensured that disadvantaged pupils' progress is a high priority for all. A wide range of support and interventions have been put in place to ensure that gaps are identified and addressed. As a result, disadvantaged pupils are now making better progress in English and mathematics across the school. You are aware of the need to ensure that these successful strategies continue to embed so that progress accelerates and this group achieve outcomes that are at least in line with pupils nationally.
- Finally, I considered how effective leaders' actions have been in improving attendance and reducing persistent absence for disadvantaged pupils and those pupils who have an education, health and care plan. I found that the school has many effective systems. For example, staff phone the homes of absent pupils on the first day of absence and term time holidays are not authorised. Leaders work closely with external agencies and provide support for families to help ensure good attendance. Governors fund places in the breakfast club for disadvantaged pupils and attendance for the majority of pupils is now at least in line with national levels.

Next steps for the school

Leaders and those responsible for governance should ensure that:

- all pupils, particularly the most able in mathematics, are moved on to more challenging work quickly, so they reach their full potential

- they further improve outcomes in writing by eliminating inconsistencies in expectations across the curriculum
- the strongest practice is shared across the school so all adults facilitate and extend pupils' learning equally effectively.

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

Yours sincerely

Lou Anderson
Ofsted Inspector

Information about the inspection

I met with the headteacher, senior and subject leaders, governors and a representative from the local authority, scrutinised pupils' work in English, mathematics and a range of subject/topic books. I visited lessons in the early years and key stages 1 and 2 to observe learning. I talked to pupils about their learning both at formal and informal times throughout the day. I met with parents at the start of the school day and analysed responses to Parent View, Ofsted's online questionnaire for parents, and staff and pupil questionnaires. I scrutinised a range of documentation, including the school's self-evaluation, school improvement plans, pupils' attendance information, documentation related to safeguarding, and the school's assessment and behaviour information.