

Ofsted  
Piccadilly Gate  
Store Street  
Manchester  
M1 2WD

T 0300 123 4234  
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Mrs Dawn Cox  
The Hill Primary School  
Peppard Road  
Caversham  
Reading  
Berkshire  
RG4 8TU

Dear Mrs Cox

### **Short inspection of The Hill Primary School**

Following my visit to the school on 11 April 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 your school was judged to be good in November 2013.

#### **This school continues to be good.**

The leadership team has maintained the good quality of education in the school since the last inspection.

Your strong leadership is central to the school's success. You have built an effective team of leaders who share your vision for the school and for its pupils, and make a valuable contribution to the school's development. For example, in the past year, your deputy headteacher has played a central role in strengthening assessment procedures. As a result, leaders, teachers and governors have an even sharper view of pupils' progress so that they can target support for individual pupils with increasing precision.

You, your staff and the governors work positively and constructively together, continuously reviewing and developing the school's work in your drive to provide the best quality education for your pupils. You and your team took swift and successful action to reverse a dip in standards at the end of key stage 2 in 2016. For example, your assistant headteacher has worked alongside teachers to improve aspects of their practice, such as the use of questioning during lessons. As a result, pupils' outcomes at the end of Year 6 recovered in 2017 and were higher than the national average in reading, writing and mathematics.

You have addressed the key issues raised at the time of the previous inspection in full. Improvements in teaching have accelerated pupils' progress across the curriculum. For example, teachers have higher expectations of pupils' learning than at the time of the previous inspection and have a better understanding of how to

deepen pupils' knowledge. They use questioning consistently well during lessons to explore and extend pupils' understanding. The quality of pupils' work has improved as a result, particularly for the most able pupils.

Your school's busy, orderly and welcoming atmosphere provides a strong framework for pupils' learning. Pupils are keen to learn and attend school regularly. They are polite, kind and behave well. By the end of Year 6, pupils are mature, perceptive and responsible young people. They are very well equipped for the next step in their education.

You are understandably proud of the quality of your curriculum, which is skilfully designed to enthuse pupils about learning from the moment they start school. An extensive range of performing arts and sports events add depth and breadth to pupils' learning. This helps them to develop personal skills, such as confidence, resilience and independence. Pupils' love of school is illustrated by one pupil's comment, 'I would like to be able to go to school at the weekends: I enjoy it so much.' Parents are highly appreciative of all that you and your staff do for their children.

You and your governors have an accurate view of the school's performance, being clear about priorities for future developments. For example, you have rightly identified that recent improvements in the quality of mathematics teaching are not yet as well established in all classes and that a small number of disadvantaged pupils make slower progress in mathematics than they should, as a result. Consequently, while disadvantaged pupils' progress has improved considerably during the past year, this remains a key focus for school development. You have suitable plans in place to secure further improvements in teaching and in disadvantaged pupils' learning.

### **Safeguarding is effective.**

You and your leadership team give safeguarding the highest priority. You make sure that safeguarding arrangements are fit for purpose and rigorously maintained. Your business manager and office manager complete recruitment and suitability checks carefully and conscientiously, so that the workforce is secure and pupils can learn safely. Strong staff teamwork, positive relationships with parents and effective links with agencies ensure that senior leaders are able to identify and deal with any safeguarding queries quickly, sensitively and appropriately.

You and your team make sure that the school provides pupils and staff with a safe and attractive working environment. Well-maintained and good-quality resources contribute well to pupils' learning and to their enjoyment of school.

Pupils feel safe, respected and valued. Those who spoke with me said that there are rarely any problems with poor behaviour or unkindness. However, they feel confident that teachers would sort out any concerns should any arise. One pupil summed up the views of others when she said, 'I like the way that our teachers help us and support us.'

## Inspection findings

- During this inspection, I focused on: how effectively teaching challenges and extends learning for the most able pupils, particularly in mathematics; disadvantaged pupils' progress; and the quality of pupils' writing across the curriculum.
- Consistently effective teaching in all year groups ensures that the most able pupils make strong progress throughout the school. The most able achieve well in English and mathematics by the end of early years, and at the end of each key stage. Pupils' thoughtful contributions during lessons, and the work in their books, illustrate the school's success in ensuring that the most able pupils achieve well. The proportions of pupils achieving the higher standards in reading, writing and mathematics at the end of Year 2 and Year 6 have been above the national average for the past two years.
- Leaders have made good use of training since the previous inspection to increase teachers' understanding about how to extend pupils' learning more effectively. Teachers use questioning well during lessons to explore and deepen pupils' understanding. They plan demanding activities so that pupils have to think hard when completing work.
- Recent developments in mathematics teaching have strengthened pupils' reasoning and problem-solving skills, including for the most able pupils. For example, teachers have increased the use of practical equipment, such as cubes and counters, to improve pupils' mathematical understanding. Pupils of all abilities are developing an increasingly confident and secure mathematical understanding as a result. Leaders are now focusing on making sure that improvements in mathematics teaching are fully established across the school, so that all groups of pupils make the same strong progress.
- In the past year, leaders have taken successful steps to improve the quality of learning for disadvantaged pupils. For example, leaders and teachers have established detailed action plans for individual pupils so that everyone is clear about pupils' specific needs. Extra help is targeted where most needed. As a result, disadvantaged pupils' progress has improved and the differences between the attainment of disadvantaged pupils and that of their peers have diminished in reading, writing and mathematics. Leaders are determined to eradicate the small differences which remain so that all disadvantaged pupils achieve as well as they should in mathematics by the end of key stage 2.
- Leaders have made changes to the teaching of writing during the past few years which have accelerated pupils' progress in English. For example, teachers provide pupils with more opportunities to produce high-quality written work across the curriculum than at the time of the previous inspection. Consequently, pupils become proficient and engaging writers by the end of key stage 2, successfully adapting the structure and style of their writing according to the purpose of the task and their audience.

## **Next steps for the school**

Leaders and those responsible for governance should ensure that:

- recent improvements in mathematics teaching are fully established so that disadvantaged pupils make the same consistently strong progress in this subject as other pupils.

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

Yours sincerely

Julie Sackett  
**Ofsted Inspector**

## **Information about the inspection**

During the inspection, I visited all classes with you or with one of your senior leaders. I looked at pupils' work during lessons, as well as looking separately at a sample of their workbooks. I spoke with pupils during my visits to the classrooms and in the playground at lunchtime.

I met with you, your deputy headteacher and with other senior leaders. I also spoke with four governors, including the chair of the governing body, and met a representative of the local authority.

I took account of 186 responses to Ofsted's online questionnaire, Parent View. I reviewed the school's website and considered a range of documents, including your summary of the school's effectiveness and the school's improvement plan. I also looked at a range of safeguarding documents.