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Mrs Stephanie Colegate
Headteacher
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Dear Mrs Colegate

Short inspection of Homelands Primary School

Following my visit to the school on 15 May 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 February 2015.

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.**

You lead a happy, caring school community. Pupils' behaviour is a strength; they conduct themselves well both in class and across the school. They speak confidently with one another and adults. During lessons, they work well with one another. Pupils are happy and forge strong friendships. They respect each other's viewpoints, however different, and actively encourage one another. They have a particular fondness for reading and hold meaningful discussions with one another regarding their book choice and favourite authors.

Recently, you have recruited new leaders for mathematics and literacy. They both have an astute understanding of the subjects they lead and are well placed to drive improvements. They are implementing actions that are beginning to have an impact across the school.

Leaders and governors have a range of assessment information readily available, but it focuses too much on pupils' recent progress rather than progress over time. This makes it confusing for leaders when setting targets for pupils and monitoring progress. As a result, this makes it more difficult for leaders to check the effectiveness of actions to bring about improvements in their areas of responsibility.

Safeguarding is effective.

Safeguarding is a strength of the school. Leaders of safeguarding work effectively to ensure that pupils are safe and risk is minimised. Leaders have a robust appointments procedure in place, making sure that they only recruit staff who are suitable to work with children. In addition, leaders make sure that they record information effectively about staff on the school's single central register.

Leaders have a proactive approach to safeguarding children across the school. Their approach of 'prevention, rather than cure' has minimised the need for referrals to external agencies. Leaders work effectively with families. Through the school's Every Child Matters team, leaders regularly discuss support for pupils and families. They consider a wealth of support, including safeguarding, behavioural, support for pupils who have special educational needs (SEN) and/or disabilities as well as pastoral support. This child-centred approach ensures that current information is considered and, when needed, leaders are well placed to involve external agencies.

Where possible, leaders engage with families to add an additional strand of support and direction. There are occasions where leaders must pass on concerns about pupils to involve external support. Leaders praise the impact that this service has had on providing advice on specific enquiries and concerns. As a result of school leaders' effective work with external agencies, pupils are safe.

Inspection findings

- At the beginning of the inspection, we agreed on the key lines of enquiry to consider during the day. First, I considered how leaders' actions are improving pupils' progress in reading across key stage 2, particularly for middle-attaining pupils. Second, I considered how teaching, learning and assessment support and challenge lower-attaining pupils across key stage 1 to work at expectations for their age in writing. Finally, I considered how teaching, learning and assessment support higher-attaining pupils across key stage 2 to make strong progress in mathematics, and how this allows a greater proportion of pupils to work at the higher standard.
- Over the last three years, middle-attaining pupils' reading progress has declined, resulting in progress for these pupils being significantly below national averages in 2017. As a result, by the end of Year 6, the proportion of middle-attaining pupils working at expectations for their age has fallen below national averages.
- It is clear that leaders' actions to improve reading are positive and have greatly improved the frequency and quality of reading opportunities. Leaders have placed significant focus on improving pupils' language comprehension, through increased emphasis on developing their vocabulary. However, despite leaders' positive actions, the proportion of current pupils working at expectations for their age in reading has declined from the end of key stage 1.
- Pupils speak enthusiastically about reading and hold meaningful discussions with one another about books they have read. Pupils are provided with books that match their reading ability. Pupils read fluently, which strengthens their ability to

understand what they have read. Furthermore, pupils are independently applying the skills they have learned. In one case, a pupil explained how she worked out the meaning of the word 'reassured' by considering the context of the sentence to draw out its meaning. Pupils also explain how vital it is to be able to read, from learning about morals in a story, to accessing teacher feedback. Pupils appreciate the importance of reading.

- Leaders have also ensured that pupils have regular opportunities to answer questions about texts they have read. Through the school's system, teachers ensure that pupils develop knowledge in answering a range of questions, including the use of prediction and inference. Furthermore, leaders have encouraged reading across the school effectively, which has ensured that pupils read widely and often. Pupils speak enthusiastically about the school's 'Bookopoly' scheme and are eager to read a range of books, earning points as they make their way around the board.
- In 2016 and 2017, those pupils who were previously working below expectations for their age in writing by the end of the Reception had caught up by the end of key stage 1. This was below national averages for this group of pupils. Current tracking of Year 1 and 2 pupils from this group shows that still too few are working at expectations for their age.
- Spelling mistakes are too common, proving a significant barrier to these pupils reaching expectations for their age. Words such as 'sunny', 'when', 'looked', 'down' and 'what' are examples of words that pupils of a similar age would be expected to spell correctly. In some cases, it is difficult to read back what pupils are writing as spelling mistakes are frequent. On occasions, pupils are not applying their phonic knowledge effectively.
- Teachers plan activities that do not consistently meet the needs of lower-attaining pupils. An example of this is where teachers ask pupils to read and write words that they are not yet able to decode. As a result, it is difficult for pupils either to read back their writing or understand what they have written. In addition, teachers are not consistently deploying support staff and so their effectiveness in lessons is variable. In some cases, staff over-support learning activities for pupils. This prevents pupils' independence and does not encourage them to apply what they already know.
- In 2016, no prior-higher-attaining pupils were working at a higher standard in mathematics by the end of key stage 2. Despite improvements in 2017, the proportion of pupils working at a higher standard was slightly below national averages. The mathematics leader, who has been in post for 18 months, has correctly identified the areas of strength and weaknesses across the school. She has recognised that there is a need to improve opportunities for pupils to access more reasoning and problem-solving activities.
- In lessons, there is a lack of consistency in the level of challenge for pupils. Teachers are not yet using assessment information to provide activities that challenge all pupils, particularly higher-attaining pupils. Furthermore, teachers do not use questioning effectively to probe pupils' understanding and provide further challenge. Teachers are not utilising this useful method of capturing pupils' understanding to further meet their needs. In some classes, teachers are too

slow to provide challenge, despite knowing that pupils are more than capable of attempting trickier activities. As a consequence, this slows progress.

- In books, there is vast evidence of pupils developing their mathematical fluency knowledge. However, as the mathematics leader rightly identified, there is a need to provide more opportunities for pupils to reason and problem-solve. As it stands, pupils have limited opportunities to broaden their knowledge across the mathematics curriculum. There is strong practice in the teaching of mathematics in the school, which leaders need to share to ensure consistent high quality across all classes.

Next steps for the school

Leaders and those responsible for governance should ensure that:

- in mathematics, teachers raise the level of challenge for all pupils, particularly the most able, through a rich diet of opportunities to develop fluency, reasoning and problem solving alongside informed teacher assessment
- they use accurate assessment information and robust monitoring to improve standards in their areas of responsibility, resulting in improved pupils' progress
- across key stage 1, activities closely match pupils' phonic knowledge so that pupils are increasingly accurate when applying spelling rules to their writing.

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

Yours sincerely

Nathan Kemp
Her Majesty's Inspector

Information about the inspection

During this inspection, I met with you and the deputy headteacher to discuss the school's performance since the last inspection, as well as current performance and the school's improvement plan. I observed lessons and, together with middle leaders and the SEN coordinator, we looked at a sample of pupils' workbooks. I spoke with a member of the school's governing body. I also met with a group of key stage 2 pupils to discuss their attitudes towards reading and listened to them read an extract from the book they are currently reading. I also questioned them about what they had read.

I met with you and the deputy designated leader for safeguarding to discuss safeguarding across the school and scrutinised various safeguarding records. We discussed the school's approach to reporting concerns and leaders' involvement with

external agencies. I considered the school's safeguarding audit and subsequent actions, including the current action of raising pupils' awareness of staying safe online. I also took account of 41 responses to Parent View, Ofsted's online survey.