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Mrs Suzanne Lloyd
Headteacher
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Dear Mrs Lloyd

Short inspection of Hazelwood Academy

Following my visit to the school on 5 June 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.

This school continues to be good.

The leadership team has maintained the good quality of education in the school since the last inspection. Together with your effective leadership team and your focused governing body, you have continued to build on the strengths of the school and have addressed the areas that were identified as needing improvement at the time of the previous inspection.

Hazelwood is a happy school with a warm and caring ethos, where all pupils achieve well. You ensure that academic rigour is balanced with an interesting and stimulating curriculum which fully engages all pupils. This includes a wide range of trips and visits that help the pupils to learn about the world around them. Consequently, pupils are keen learners who enjoy their time at school.

You have created a 'no excuses' culture and successfully focus on helping pupils overcome potential barriers to learning. High aspirations permeate the whole staff. There is no room for complacency.

Differences in the achievement of groups, particularly the most able and disadvantaged pupils, noted at the previous inspection, have been rectified by the introduction of a consistent approach to the tracking and checking of their progress. This ensures that all teaching staff target and plan appropriate work for different ability groups. Senior leaders carefully monitor and sample pupils' books. This enables leaders to hold teaching staff firmly to account for any dips in the progress of individuals. Subject leaders have played a valuable role in helping the school

improve further since the previous inspection. They know what is working well and are clear about those areas that need to further improve.

Governors are justifiably proud of their school and put the best interests of pupils at the heart of their decision making. Regular visits in to school help them to form their own strategic view and enable them to ask challenging questions of senior leaders. They ensure that all decisions are firmly rooted so that pupils make the best possible progress in their learning.

Safeguarding is effective.

Staff work tirelessly to ensure that pupils are, and feel, safe. They are vigilant and report concerns that they have to the designated safeguarding leaders. Pupils appreciate the very positive relationships that they have with staff and this enables them to confidently share their worries or concerns with them.

Leaders are sensitive to the challenges and needs of their local community and work hard to engage with the families. Effective training has been provided for both staff and governors in relation to child sexual exploitation, radicalisation and the Department for Education's latest guidance 'Keeping children safe in education'. Rigorous checks are carried out on new potential employees and robust induction procedures ensure that the safety of the pupils is never compromised when appointing new staff.

Staff work well with a wide range of other agencies and professionals. They ensure that case files have clear and detailed records of interactions that they have with vulnerable pupils. The family support worker and the early help support worker play a key role in making sure that vulnerable pupils and their families are well supported. Working alongside them, staff signpost parents to relevant external agencies and ensure that they receive the specialist help that they need.

Pupils report that they feel safe in school and know that if they have a worry or problem there is always someone who they can go to for help or advice. They have a very clear understanding of how to keep safe using the internet, both at home and in school. Pupils talk confidently about the importance of keeping healthy and fit by eating sensibly and exercising regularly.

In the past, fixed-term exclusions have been above the national average. The reasons for these exclusions and the actions taken to reintegrate the pupils are explained and clearly documented. You and your senior leaders have worked hard to support those pupils who could be in danger of a fixed-term exclusion and, consequently, rates have reduced during the current academic year.

Inspection findings

- The introduction of a mathematics programme of work, which clearly defines each step in developing pupils' understanding of concepts and skills, is having a very positive impact on pupils' progress. Pupils grasp new concepts quickly

because they are introduced to them through practical and visual tasks which help them to think through their learning. This enables them to apply their new knowledge, explain it and use it to solve mathematical problems. As a result, currently all pupils, including the most able and those who are disadvantaged, are making good progress in mathematics. They have built on their knowledge and skills well from their low starting points. For example, the majority of the current Year 6 pupils are working at the expected standard for their age. Almost a quarter of Year 6 pupils are working at a greater depth than expected for their age.

- Accurately identifying that the pupils were not progressing at the same rate in writing as they were in mathematics and reading, you and your senior leaders have taken swift action to rectify this. Introducing a new way of developing writing skills is effectively stimulating pupils' thinking. Sharing high-quality literature with pupils and encouraging story-telling skills is extending their vocabulary and helping them to speak confidently. It is also encouraging them to write for a different range of purposes, such as creative stories and factual accounts, using correct grammar, spelling and punctuation.
- Coupled with this new approach to writing, you and your senior leaders have introduced a sharper focus to the teaching of phonics. This is ensuring that those pupils who need extra help with these skills receive teaching that is tailored to meet the needs of individual pupils. As a result, pupils are confident in their use of phonics and most of the current Year 1 are working at the expected standard for their age.
- The proportion of children who reach a good level of development at the end of their Reception Year is no longer declining. This has been achieved by an overhaul of the early years provision, based on research and sharing best practice with other schools. The introduction of a topic-based approach, which forms the basis of both indoor and outdoor activities, is engaging the children much more because it has brought their learning alive. For example, a topic based on 'exploration' is lending itself to learning based around role play in a 'travel agency' and a 'journey' in an aeroplane. Opportunities for the children to practise their writing skills and use a range of mathematical concepts are plentiful.
- The recent introduction of part-time provision for two-year-olds is also enhancing learning opportunities for the youngest children within the local community and helping them to engage with school life. Nevertheless, you recognise that there is still a way to go to ensure that all early years teaching staff have the highest expectations of what the children can do and do not miss any learning opportunities for them to extend their learning.
- You and your leaders use a wide range of rewards and sanctions to improve the attendance of those pupils whose parents regularly keep them at home. However, there remains a stubborn core of families who fail to adhere to your firm stance on regular attendance. Consequently, those pupils who are persistently absent from school lose valuable learning time.
- You and your staff are steadily improving relationships with parents by encouraging them to engage in their children's learning. The early years teaching

team are successfully helping parents to understand how they can help their children to learn. Activities give parents the confidence to share books and use every day routines, such as going shopping, to support the development of their children's basic skills of literacy and mathematics. As one parent who attends these sessions explained: 'I think the programme is very well structured and every lesson adds something new, encouraging my little boy to learn and develop his skills. Also, I learn a lot of new techniques, which help me to build confidence.' Parents also enjoy sharing in events where their children showcase what they have been learning in school, and these events are well attended. However, you know that much more needs to be done to engage parents further in their children's education.

Next steps for the school

Leaders and those responsible for governance should ensure that:

- all teaching staff in early years have the highest expectations of what children can do, and that they use every available opportunity to support and extend children's learning
- further steps are taken to engage the parents in all aspects of their children's learning.

I am copying this letter to the chair of the local board of trustees and the chief executive officer, the regional schools commissioner and the director of children's services for Swindon. This letter will be published on the Ofsted website.

Yours sincerely

Lorna Brackstone
Her Majesty's Inspector

Information about the inspection

During the inspection, I met with you, your two senior leaders and a group of middle leaders to discuss the school's effectiveness. I held discussions with four governors, including the chair of the local board of trustees. We visited classrooms together. I looked at a sample of books with you, your senior leaders and middle leaders. We examined documents, including information about the safeguarding of pupils, and the progress that they make in their learning. I also looked at the school's self-evaluation document. I spoke to pupils informally and had a discussion with five Year 6 pupils. I considered the four responses and free-text comments submitted to the inspection questionnaire, Parent View. I also looked at feedback given by parents following a training session.