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Piccadilly Gate
Store Street
Manchester
M1 2WD

T 0300 123 4234
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18 June 2018

Mr Steven Turnbull
Headteacher
Hazelmere Infant School and Nursery
Hawthorn Avenue
Greenstead Estate
Colchester
Essex
CO4 3JP

Dear Mr Turnbull

Short inspection of Hazelmere Infant School and Nursery

Following my visit to the school on 7 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 September 2014.

This school continues to be good.

The leadership team has maintained the good quality of education in the school since the last inspection. The areas for improvement identified at the time of the previous inspection have been fully addressed.

You and your senior leadership team are highly committed to meeting the full range of needs of all pupils and ensure that you balance high academic expectations with effective care and concern. Only a few parents responded to the online questionnaire, Parent View, or provided free-text responses. However, those who did respond were very positive about the school. Parents spoken to informally were also pleased with all aspects of the school. Typical comments included, 'I cannot fault the school,' and 'I cannot praise this school enough for the amount of effort they put in, with the pupils and the parents.'

Leaders, including governors, have a secure understanding of the school's strengths and where it needs to improve further. Governors visit the school regularly and are well informed about all aspects of school life. Their knowledge of the school, together with their range of skills, enables them to provide an effective balance of challenge and support. They are ambitious for the school and ensure that they monitor all aspects of the school improvement plan.

Pupils behave well around the school and in lessons. In all classrooms we visited, there was a calm, purposeful working atmosphere, and pupils were fully engaged in and enjoying their learning. Work in books reflects the pride that most pupils take in

their work. You have introduced changes to topics to provide more exciting learning opportunities which link different areas of the curriculum together. During the inspection, we saw that pupils were highly engaged in their learning about Madagascar, which was providing good opportunities for them to write, and also for mathematical activities. Pupils' knowledge about this topic was impressive, reflecting their good learning.

The school's values of achievement, enjoyment, honesty, positivity, respect and teamwork are promoted consistently and are demonstrated by pupils around the school and in the playground, where pupils play happily together. They have no worries about bullying and are confident that adults will always resolve any issues that do arise.

Safeguarding is effective.

There is a strong culture of safeguarding at the heart of this caring school. Leaders have ensured that all procedures for safeguarding are fit for purpose. Staff receive regular and appropriate training in all aspects of safeguarding. Consequently, they understand their role in keeping pupils safe. They are vigilant and know how to spot changes in pupils' behaviour and appearance which might suggest a safeguarding concern. Any concerns that are raised are recorded systematically and followed up promptly.

There are effective systems in place to make all appropriate checks on new staff prior to appointment, to ensure that they are suitable to work with children. This process is overseen effectively by the school business manager. Governors regularly monitor the effectiveness of safeguarding procedures to ensure that these meet statutory requirements.

Inspection findings

- My first key line of enquiry, to verify the school's current performance, focused on attendance. I wanted to see if the improvements seen in 2017 have been maintained. Over recent years, the school has worked hard to improve the attendance of all pupils, including those who are disadvantaged. Attendance is closely monitored, and all absence is rigorously followed up. This has included providing support for parents and also taking robust action against some parents, culminating in the issue of penalty notices. Good attendance is celebrated. Most pupils attend regularly. However, the attendance of a small minority of pupils remains low and this has an impact on their learning and progress.
- I also focused on disadvantaged pupils. At the end of early years, the attainment of this group of pupils has been lower than that of their non-disadvantaged peers nationally. By the end of key stage 1, in 2016, there were large differences between the attainment of disadvantaged pupils and other pupils in writing and mathematics.
- You provided information about the Year 2 disadvantaged pupils in 2016 and explained that this group included a number of pupils who had special educational needs (SEN) and/or disabilities. Although these pupils made good

progress from their starting points, they did not reach the standards expected for their age. In 2017, at the end of key stage 1, disadvantaged pupils outperformed non-disadvantaged pupils in the school and their achievement was above that of other pupils nationally. We considered school tracking information about the progress and attainment of current disadvantaged pupils. Differences are diminishing across the school. However, they have not been totally eradicated and you are aware of the importance of maintaining an unremitting focus on this group of pupils.

- My third line of enquiry focused on the early years. The proportion of children reaching a good level of development has been below average for three consecutive years. This includes disadvantaged pupils. Together with the early years leader, I looked at learning and progress in the Nursery and Reception classes. A high proportion of children, including those who are disadvantaged, start school with skills that are below those typically seen. New initiatives are ensuring that additional adult support is more effectively targeted to help children catch up. School assessment information shows that children are making good progress from their starting points and this is also reflected in their learning journeys. This evidence indicates that outcomes are likely to be higher at the end of the early years in 2018, although still below average. Leaders have identified improving outcomes at the end of the early years as a continuing priority.
- My next line of enquiry was to confirm whether there is capacity to build on and sustain improvements. Standards dipped in 2016. No pupils achieved greater depth in writing or mathematics, and pupils' progress from the end of the early years to the end of Year 2 was not good enough. Outcomes improved in 2017, and the proportion of pupils who achieved greater depth was above average for reading, writing and mathematics. The school's internal tracking information and work seen in pupils' books indicate that this improvement is likely to be maintained this year. This reflects the actions leaders have taken to improve the accuracy of assessment and introduce a more interesting curriculum.
- Lastly, I wanted to check how effectively the school has addressed the areas for improvement identified at the time of the last inspection. The employment of and more effective use of additional adults in the Reception classes are ensuring that all pupils are more effectively challenged, including when learning outside. Staff are consistently implementing revised approaches to providing feedback to pupils. The breadth of the curriculum is reflected around the school, and revised topics include interesting opportunities to learn about different cultures. Additionally, the school draws well from the local community to enrich pupils' learning and understanding of different cultures. The school has addressed effectively all areas for improvement that were identified at the time of the previous inspection.

Next steps for the school

Leaders and those responsible for governance should ensure that:

- differences between disadvantaged and non-disadvantaged pupils continue to narrow

- they continue to encourage parents to ensure that their children attend regularly
- improvements in the early years are consolidated, so that standards continue to rise and are in line with those seen nationally.

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

Yours sincerely

Joan Beale
Ofsted Inspector

Information about the inspection

I held discussions with you about the key lines of enquiry for this inspection, the school's self-evaluation of its performance, plans for future improvement and information about current pupils' progress and attainment. Meetings were held with subject and senior leaders and four governors. Additionally, I held a telephone conversation with a representative of the local authority.

We visited all classrooms together to observe teaching, learning and assessment, and looked at the work in pupils' books in a range of subjects.

I met with a group of pupils to talk about their experiences at school and also talked more informally with pupils in lessons and at break time. I scrutinised safeguarding policies and practice, including systems for safe recruitment of staff.

The views of seven parents who responded to Ofsted's online questionnaire, Parent View, were taken into account as well as five responses using the free-text service. I also considered the views of the parents I spoke with during the inspection and those who had responded to the school's own questionnaire.