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Mrs Judith Ejdowski
Headteacher
Haydon Abbey School and Pre-School
Weedon Road
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Dear Mrs Ejdowski

Short inspection of Haydon Abbey School and Pre-School

Following my visit to the school on 10 July 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 October 2014.

This school continues to be good.

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

You, your leadership team and staff have developed strong relationships with pupils and their families. You know your school well and are accurate in your judgements about the quality of teaching and how well pupils achieve. You have established a culture of high expectations.

Staff and pupils have worked well together to define the school's values of 'respect, honesty, resilience, cooperation and well-being'. Pupils live out these values fully in the school's daily life. Consequently, pupils are polite, hard-working and helpful in their lessons and during playtimes. They enjoy learning, settle to work quickly and are keen to find out new things.

Many parents and carers express their confidence in the school. Comments such as 'I am extremely pleased with the way in which my son has progressed' and 'My daughter has come on leaps and bounds' were typical of many parents' views. Some parents, however, voiced concern about the behaviour of pupils. Most parents find the school supportive and welcoming.

Leaders have taken effective action to address the areas for improvement identified at the last inspection. Teachers plan well to ensure that pupils apply their mathematical skills to problems and investigations in a range of contexts. Leaders have developed a well-structured programme to develop the skills of staff and

middle leaders. Staff have observed each other's teaching practice, as well as high-quality teaching in other schools. They have also benefited from the work of leaders with expertise in specific areas. Staff value the wide range of opportunities to develop their skills and, as a result, their teaching and leadership skills have improved effectively. You acknowledge that there is more work to be done to ensure that staff challenge pupils consistently well. The most able pupils need to be stretched to think more deeply about their learning and reach the higher standards. This is particularly the case in writing, where achievement is not as strong as it is in reading and mathematics.

Governors have a thorough understanding of the school. Their wealth of skills and experience enables them to support the school's improvement well. Governors use information about pupils' outcomes to challenge school leaders robustly. They ensure that their regular visits enable them to see, at first hand, the impact of leaders' work and check on planned improvements.

Safeguarding is effective.

Leaders, including governors, have helped to establish a strong safeguarding culture. One member of staff said, 'Nothing is ever too small to mention.' Staff know pupils well and are alert to any changes in their attendance, appearance or behaviour that may indicate a pupil is vulnerable. Staff know how to report concerns swiftly and the school's safeguarding records are detailed and comprehensive.

Governors use their skills and knowledge to support the school's safeguarding work extremely well. They make sure that all recruitment and background checks on adults working in school are carried out meticulously and they keep up to date with the most recent safeguarding regulations. All staff have received appropriate training.

Pupils said that they feel safe and well cared for at school. They are clear that the school's rules help to keep them safe. Pupils are confident that most pupils behave well and any minor problems are dealt with effectively. Pupils were keen to talk about the important help they receive from the pastoral team in the 'Seaton Suite' if they need support with a concern.

Inspection findings

- The inspection focused on four key lines of enquiry that we agreed at the start. The first key line of enquiry looked at the progress that pupils make in reading, particularly boys. Pupils' phonics knowledge is strong because staff have a secure understanding of how to teach early reading skills. Teachers select texts that motivate and challenge boys well. Pupils receive effective support through bespoke programmes to help them to catch up if they fall behind. Older pupils have good opportunities to develop their reading skills when they read texts in different subjects. For example, pupils research 'themes' and are challenged to read detailed factual texts that stretch their comprehension skills. Pupils also unpick the meaning within a range of demanding fiction books. Boys enjoy

reading and make good progress across the school.

- The second key line of enquiry looked at disadvantaged pupils' attainment in reading, writing and mathematics. There has been a strong whole-school focus on ensuring that disadvantaged pupils make more rapid progress to enable them to reach the higher standards. Leaders and teachers track their achievement closely. Consequently, staff are very aware of any pupil who is not making enough progress and attaining as highly as they could. Disadvantaged pupils are usually challenged appropriately because work is matched well to their needs. Teachers also ensure that pupils have the correct level of support. Additional adults challenge pupils effectively through well-framed questions. As a result, disadvantaged pupils' attainment is rising quickly and is close to the expected standard for their age because they make rapid progress. However, pupils' progress in writing, including that of disadvantaged pupils, is not as strong as it is in reading and mathematics. Pupils, particularly the most able pupils, do not always receive work that challenges them sufficiently to achieve the higher standards. When this is the case, pupils' progress and attainment in writing are not as good as they could be.
- I examined pupils' progress in mathematics, especially the progress of the most able pupils. Teachers plan challenging learning tasks involving problem-solving and reasoning. Staff show pupils how to use a range of different methods to approach such tasks accurately. Consequently, pupils have a good understanding of how to apply their mathematical skills successfully. Pupils' books demonstrate that their understanding of these strategies is embedded firmly across the school. Teachers ensure that the most able pupils typically learn well in mathematics. Staff usually plan meaningful activities that stretch pupils' skills. Pupils are challenged further by having to explain their thinking. There are times when the level of challenge does not stretch pupils' thinking sufficiently, especially for the most able. Learning slows as a result.
- My final key line of enquiry looked at how the school is addressing the high rate of exclusions evident in previous years. Leaders have developed a number of effective support and preventative measures that have significantly reduced the number of pupils excluded from school. For example, some pupils have a behaviour support plan which identifies the specific areas that pupils and staff need to work on together. Leaders have also ensured that exclusion, if needed, is markedly shorter. The pastoral team works closely with outside agencies to provide pupils and their parents with the right support to help minimise the risk of exclusion. Staff receive guidance from behaviour specialists so they are exceptionally aware of how to prevent and manage behaviour that falls short of the school's expectations.

Next steps for the school

Leaders and those responsible for governance should ensure that:

- teachers challenge pupils consistently well, particularly the most able pupils, so that a larger proportion achieve the higher standards
- pupils' achievement in writing is strengthened.

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

Yours sincerely

Richard Blackmore
Ofsted Inspector

Information about the inspection

During the inspection, I met with you, three governors and the lead teachers for English and mathematics. I also met with a representative from the local authority. I talked with parents as they collected their children at the end of the school day. I visited classes and reviewed a sample of pupils' current books. I considered information about pupils' achievement and exclusions, the school improvement plan, evidence of leaders' monitoring of teaching and learning and documents related to safeguarding. I took account of 21 responses from parents to Ofsted's online survey, Parent View, including 19 free-text comments. I also considered the responses to Ofsted's online pupil survey and staff survey.