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Mrs Charlotte Westmorland  
Headteacher  
Hornbeam Primary School  
Mongeham Road  
Deal  
Kent  
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Dear Mrs Westmorland

### **Short inspection of Hornbeam Primary School**

Following my visit to the school on 18 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 March 2014.

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

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

Since your appointment as headteacher in September 2017, you have successfully built on the strengths in the school and worked effectively to make further improvements in many aspects of the provision. You lead this inclusive school very effectively and have ensured that the provision has adapted to meet the changing profile of the school. There are increasing numbers of pupils who have mobility and specific care needs and, for the first time, you have had two classes in the Reception Year.

You have gained the confidence of governors, staff, parents and carers in your leadership. You and your deputy headteacher work well together as a strong team. You place great importance on developing the leadership potential of other staff, and a new senior leadership team is already demonstrating a positive impact on school improvement. Further development of leadership at all levels is a priority as it is too soon to see the full impact of leaders' work.

Parents are overwhelmingly supportive of the school, and especially how well the staff help to prepare pupils for their future lives, both academically and in their personal development. One parent wrote: 'My son has blossomed into a caring, conscientious, confident and hard-working young man ready for the challenges of secondary school.'

You have been mindful of the recommendations from the previous inspection. The large majority of younger pupils now use their phonics skills effectively to help them write, as well as read, unfamiliar words. You have carefully analysed the dip from the standard reached in 2017 in the proportion of pupils who reached the expected standard in the Year 1 phonics screening check in 2018. Starting points for the 2018 cohort were much lower than previously, particularly in children's communication, language and literacy skills. Actions are already in place to ensure that these pupils catch up quickly in Year 2. You have implemented actions to support the progress of the most able pupils in mathematics. An example of this is the opportunity for pupils to work with those of a similar ability from the partnership schools in the Deal Learning Alliance. Nevertheless, leaders know that more could be done to challenge the most able pupils.

You and other senior leaders evaluate effectively the quality of teaching and learning and other aspects of the school's work to identify strengths and areas for further improvement. Reading, for example, was an area identified for further improvement and you have implemented a variety of initiatives to help raise achievement. A focus on pupils' use of inference, developing their comprehension skills and providing reading nurture groups, along with other support, have helped to raise the status and enjoyment of reading and improve achievement.

Children make good progress in the early years. The classrooms are full of labels, instructions, posters and prompts for writing and reading. These rich resources are used successfully to help boost children's communication, language and literacy skills, which you identified as their weakest areas, being below those typical for their age when they started.

Pupils thoroughly enjoy their time at school. They are extremely polite and friendly, and are happy to talk about their learning and share their views. They have excellent attitudes, and are proud of their school and their achievements. This was seen to excellent effect when the Year 3 pupils showcased their work on the Romans for their parents. A parent wrote: 'My daughter enjoys coming into school every day and has grown and developed greatly in her personality, confidence and academic achievement. This is all thanks to the fabulous team at Hornbeam.'

### **Safeguarding is effective.**

You, as the main designated safeguarding lead, have ensured that all safeguarding arrangements are fit for purpose and there is a strong culture of safeguarding in the school. The other senior leaders are also trained to be designated safeguarding leaders, and this ensures that there is always someone in the school for staff to go to with any concerns. All staff receive regular training, know the procedures to follow and are vigilant in doing so. Your record-keeping systems are very well organised and of the highest quality, and ensure that information is easily shared with external agencies when necessary.

Staff know the pupils and their families well. They are alert to any problems, and are vigilant in raising any concerns should they arise. Pupils say they feel safe in

school and are confident to talk to staff if they have any problems. They know they will be listened to and taken seriously. They have a good understanding of how to keep themselves safe in a range of situations, including when online. Pupils have a heightened sense of awareness, respect and acceptance of the needs of others in school, and particularly those pupils who have disabilities.

Parents feel that their children are kept safe in school and are well looked after. One parent wrote of their child's experience: 'The school were very supportive, ensuring his safety, talking to him when he needed someone and listening to my needs and concerns.' You ensure that rigorous risk assessments are carried out for school trips and school-based provision, for example in the forest school and for the bouncy fun day for Year 6 pupils during the inspection. You also ensure that the range of pupils' medical needs are met in school and on trips.

Attendance has improved to the national average. The leadership team is very active in promoting regular attendance for all pupils, and keeps a careful track on the attendance of different groups.

### **Inspection findings**

- At the beginning of the inspection, as well as looking at the effectiveness of safeguarding, we agreed to focus on: the progress of current pupils in mathematics; pupils' achievement at greater depth in writing at key stage 2; and the impact of the work of leaders at all levels.
- Expectations in mathematics have risen. The greater use of a range of practical equipment is helping pupils to understand better the mathematics they are doing. As a result, pupils are improving their mathematical fluency, and achievement has improved, particularly in key stage 1. There are, however, too few opportunities in both key stages for pupils to record their mathematical reasoning, although they are competent at expressing their reasoning verbally.
- Teachers make sure that pupils have many opportunities to write for different purposes and to write extended pieces to increase their stamina for writing. Pupils enjoy writing. The varied curriculum, including the forest school and a wealth of trips, provides opportunities that inspire and motivate pupils to write. Strong links are made between reading and writing. Pupils are exposed to high-quality and challenging texts, and discuss features, such as authors' styles, choice of vocabulary and use of inference, to influence their own writing.
- School assessment information and the writing in pupils' books show improvement in the quality of pupils' writing. Nevertheless, not enough pupils are challenged sufficiently, and so progress is not consistently strong enough to ensure that more pupils reach a greater depth of understanding in their work. Pupils do not apply skills in grammar, punctuation and spelling in their work consistently enough to enhance their writing.
- You have established a senior leadership team with clear responsibilities and accountabilities, and have strengthened the capacity for further improvement. Senior leaders share your vision and ambition and welcome the opportunity and support to develop and enhance their leadership skills. Other leaders, including

governors, have clear plans for their work, and undertake monitoring activities. Governors are increasingly effective in holding leaders to account for the school's performance, ensuring that they provide robust challenge as part of their strategic work. Some valuable work has been done by subject leaders in looking at the progression of key skills in their subjects. Leadership roles are relatively new, and the impact of leaders' work on school improvement and outcomes for pupils is not yet fully and securely embedded.

### **Next steps for the school**

Leaders and those responsible for governance should ensure that:

- they build on improvements in pupils' writing, and continue to challenge pupils, both to achieve greater depth and to use and apply their spelling, grammar and punctuation skills
- pupils have more opportunities to record their reasoning in their mathematics work
- leaders at all levels have even more impact on school improvement and pupils' outcomes.

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

Yours sincerely

Margaret Coussins  
**Ofsted Inspector**

### **Information about the inspection**

I met with you, your deputy headteacher and other leaders in the school. I had telephone meetings with the chair of the governing body and the local authority school improvement adviser. You accompanied me on visits to classes. During these visits, I spoke to pupils about their learning and looked at the work in their books. I observed pupils at playtime and lunchtime, Year 6 pupils engaging in activities on the field and Year 3 pupils exhibiting their work on the Romans to their parents. I reviewed the school's website and sampled a range of documents, including information about pupils' achievement, the school development plan and documents relating to safeguarding. We discussed your own evaluation of the school's effectiveness. I took account of 35 responses from parents to Ofsted's online questionnaire, Parent View, including 19 free-text comments. I also spoke to some parents at the start of the day. I considered six responses to Ofsted's staff survey and 21 responses to Ofsted's pupil survey.