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Mr Troy Jenkinson
Headteacher
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Dear Mr Jenkinson

Short inspection of Highgate Community Primary School

Following my visit to the school on 13 September 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 November 2014.

Based on the evidence gathered during this short inspection, I have identified one important priority for improvement which I advise the school to address. In light of this priority, 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.**

During the years between the last inspection and now, several key teachers have had extended absence. Leaders were not able to attract suitable temporary teachers to replace them. This has diluted the school's capacity to address one of the areas identified for improvement in 2014. I will provide more detail later.
You became headteacher in January 2016. A deputy headteacher was appointed a year ago to a new senior post. Key teachers and leaders have returned to the school. Leadership and teaching are now stable. Governors are highly committed to their role in holding leaders to account. They have invited external advice from the local authority and have had their past approach reviewed. They are knowledgeable, using published information about outcomes, alongside their links with each class, to form an accurate view of the school. As a result, the school is well placed to drive forward with its priorities. During this inspection, I was able to see convincing evidence that there has already been a lot of improvement over the past year.

This is a school where pupils feel happy and safe and where nearly all parents and carers are confident that their children will be cared for. Pupils who need additional support usually thrive because of the effective nurture provision and the knowledge of the adults who support them. When it becomes clear that a pupil needs more

than the school can provide, leaders ensure that there is an accurate assessment to inform next steps rather than an exclusion. As a result, the use of exclusion is now rare. Pupils speak with confidence about the different ways they are taught to stay safe, citing road safety and use of the internet as examples. Pupils say that they do sometimes fall out with friends or over the rules of a game, but that a teacher will always 'take you inside to sort it out'. The pupils spoken to during the inspection were adamant that no one is picked on, while three girls explained to me at breaktime how anyone can use the 'friendship bench' if they feel sad or lonely. During this inspection, pupils' conduct was good at all times. I was impressed by their confidence when they spoke to me and explained about their learning or asked me questions about why I was visiting the school.

You and your new senior team have identified the strengths and weaknesses of the school correctly. Plans to improve the school are well formed and actions are clear. Roles have been changed and clarified so that all staff understand their part in the school's journey of improvement. Senior leaders monitor and evaluate the ongoing learning and progress of the pupils effectively and accurately, alongside other aspects of the school. This was one of the areas for improvement at the time of the last inspection. It has been addressed well.

Outcomes in 2018 show improvement already in many areas. In particular, there has been an increase in the number of pupils reaching expected and higher standards at the end of the Reception Year and at the end of Year 2. This was one of my concerns before I visited your school but I am convinced by the evidence seen that any underachievement in the past has now been addressed. I have also noted that pupils' writing by the end of Year 6 has now improved, while reading remains in line with national standards.

Safeguarding is effective.

Leaders have ensured that all safeguarding arrangements are fit for purpose. I have already commented on the pupils' feelings of safety. You have detailed knowledge of the pupils in your school and the difficulties that some of them face. As the school's designated safeguarding officer, you have made sure that staff are trained and they know what to do if they are concerned that a child is at risk of being harmed. Staff knowledge is secure and up to date. Recruitment procedures ensure that the right checks are made. The school's safeguarding policy takes account of the most recent legislation. You ensure that safeguarding records are securely stored. You keep careful track of the school's work with other agencies to ensure that each individual child is protected. Where necessary, you persist in making sure that children get the support they need. The school site is safe. I know that you are keen to develop the site further, particularly with additional fencing to separate different areas of the school grounds.

Inspection findings

- In addition to safeguarding, I focused on three important areas which I had identified as possible concerns before this inspection. One of them was the achievement of pupils in the Reception Year and during key stage 1. I have looked at the changes in teaching approaches made last year and the resulting outcomes at the end of 2017/18. I have been convinced that leaders have already had a positive impact here and that standards are now much higher in reading, writing and mathematics. During my visit, I was particularly impressed with how quickly the youngest children had settled into learning routines in Reception. This was, after all, their first full week in school, yet they all seemed very happy and engaged.
- A second area of interest during this inspection was the extent to which some pupils are persistently absent from school. Persistent absence is defined as missing more than 10%, the equivalent of one day per fortnight. Based on the figures for 2016/17, persistent absence had been rising and was higher than the national average. I was reassured once I had seen the attendance figures for last year. You had already tackled this issue successfully and had reduced the figure back to below the national average. Last year, there were good reasons for some of the persistent absence, such as extended illness. You have taken robust action in a few cases, involving the local authority and even issuing fines. We looked at the current year. It is early days, but there are very few concerns at present. This is another good example of effective work to improve an aspect of the school.
- Finally, I looked at the achievement of the pupils who have the potential to reach the highest standards by the end of Year 6. In the past, these pupils have not done as well as they could. By the end of last summer, there had been some clear improvements. In writing, for example, standards had improved in the 2018 assessments. However, standards in mathematics in 2018 were lower than in 2017, showing that progress is not yet secure in this subject. Given that progress in mathematics was an area for improvement at the last inspection, this is a concern.
- Leaders are acutely aware and have already taken action to change approaches used when teaching mathematics. When we visited mathematics lessons in key stage 2, we both saw that the pupils were engaged in interesting and challenging work which required them to think deeply and to explain their reasoning. When we looked at pupils' work in their books, I could see a difference in quality between the work of pupils last year and the equivalent-aged pupils this year. This is promising, but it is too early to claim that the problem has been solved. For example, in the lessons we visited, pupils who were tackling the most challenging questions were not always spotted quickly enough when they were struggling. In summary, outcomes in mathematics at the end of key stage 2 continue to need improvement.

Next steps for the school

Leaders and those responsible for governance should ensure that:

- they respond with appropriate urgency to the relative weakness of mathematics outcomes at the end of key stage 2 so that more pupils reach expected and higher standards in 2019 and beyond.

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

Yours sincerely

Joanne Ward
Ofsted Inspector

Information about the inspection

I considered information from a range of sources, including the previous inspection report and the school's performance between 2015 and 2018. I also reviewed the school's website and read a sample of its published policies. I spoke with parents as they brought their children to school and also considered the 35 responses to Parent View, Ofsted's online survey. I read the responses to Ofsted surveys from 15 staff and 61 pupils. Meetings were held with you, the deputy headteacher, the coordinator for special educational needs, the shadow subject leader for mathematics and with governors to discuss the school's progress since the last inspection. I considered a range of documentation, including the school's self-improvement plan summary, information kept in school about pupils' attainment and progress, records of recruitment checks on staff and volunteers, a sample of recruitment files, the safeguarding policy and records of actions taken to protect pupils' welfare, a report written by the local authority senior education effectiveness partner and attendance information for 2017/18. I looked at records of staff training to ensure that they were up to date. I talked with staff to make sure they knew what to do if they were concerned about a child. We jointly made visits to lessons, looked at the quality of work in pupils' books and spoke with pupils about their learning. I observed pupils' behaviour at breaktime, around school and in lessons and spoke to a group of Year 6 pupils to gather their views.