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Mrs Sue Bardetti
Headteacher
Holland Haven Primary School
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Dear Mrs Bardetti

Short inspection of Holland Haven Primary School

Following my visit to the school on 7 November 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 2015.

This school continues to be good.

The leadership team has maintained the good quality of education in the school since the last inspection. You have addressed the areas for improvement identified by the previous inspection with great determination and success, so that previous relative weaknesses are now strengths. For example, provision in early years has been improved with well-planned and organised indoor and outdoor areas. You and governors have a very accurate view of the school's current strengths and areas for further development. Your staff understand these too, and are working effectively to further improve pupils' outcomes.

Governors are a strong strategic body offering insightful challenge and support. This comes from the high level of expertise in various aspects of educational leadership within the governing body. The governing body holds the Governor Effectiveness Mark. Governors told me that since the previous inspection, you have established highly effective leadership. I was convinced of this in my meetings with leaders at various levels.

You empower teachers to have ideas and to promote their ideas across the school. Newly qualified teachers feel very well supported and that their ideas are valued. This provides new thinking to the workforce, a large number of whom have worked at the school for many years because they 'love it'. You are alert to the possibility that this could lead to insularity. You mitigate this risk through bringing in external training.

For example, the local authority has provided training and challenge in the light of a

dip in your 2018 results in comparison with your school's previous stronger performance. You make a very positive contribution to the education system in the Clacton area, recently chairing the local cluster of school leaders, with your deputy providing additional support. You are involved in a range of activity to support other Essex schools and support initial teacher training to address teacher shortage in the area. As a result of this work in and beyond your school, you were awarded Essex Primary and Special School Headteacher of the Year in 2017.

While a very few parents responding to Ofsted's questionnaire, Parent View, expressed concerns regarding communication, most parents were highly positive about all aspects of the school. Typical comments included, 'She has grown in confidence and is thriving at school.' Another comment recognised the high level of teamwork among staff: 'I can't speak highly enough of all the teachers, office team, headteacher and lunchtime staff at Holland Haven. They are all very hardworking and their priority is to do the very best for the children.'

As an inclusive school, you work hard to support pupils with special educational needs and/or disabilities and to manage pupils with disruptive behaviour. In the most extreme cases, you have had to exclude pupils, but you try hard to keep pupils in school. Pupils told me that even minor poor behaviour is very rare. On my tour of the school, behaviour was excellent in lessons and around the school. The pupils get on together well. Very nearly all parents responding to Parent View agree that their child is happy at school. Nobody disagrees with the statement that 'my child is safe in school.' Most agree that their child is looked after well. The overwhelming majority believe that pupils are taught well, and very nearly everyone says that pupils are well behaved. It is very clear that your school is a very friendly and caring community.

Safeguarding is effective.

Safeguarding is central to the culture of the school. Pupils were keen to tell me that they are safe and explain security systems to ensure that this is the case. Parents responding to Parent View agree that pupils are safe. There is effective leadership of safeguarding, with appropriate training for leaders, teachers and governors. Staff files and child protection files are immaculate. All statutory requirements are met. Pupils know whom they would go to if they had a problem, and were keen to tell me how well teachers care for their welfare.

Inspection findings

- I pursued several lines of enquiry to ascertain whether the school remained good. The first of these was to check that leaders' intentions for the curriculum are implemented. You were clearly pleased that I had chosen this as it is an area of particular strength. Your curriculum is inspirational. You make very effective use of the local environment to bring learning alive. For example, pupils learn about the First World War by digging trenches at the beach. Year 6 pupils told me that they enjoy a wide range of subjects.

- During my inspection, I saw children in early years learning about Diwali, the Hindu festival of light, which was celebrated that day. I also saw older pupils learning about the Hindu religion in religious education, preparing them well for life in modern Britain. I was pleased to see Year 3 pupils in French using sentences such as 'quel âge as-tu?' ('how old are you?') and pupils responding to each other, 'J'ai sept ans' or 'J'ai huit ans.' In another lesson, Year 5 and Year 6 pupils were playing the melody of Parry's setting of 'Jerusalem' with their right hands from reading musical notation, while putting in chords on their keyboards with their left hands. This developed pupils' musical knowledge and skill and their cultural awareness. In the forest school, activities linked together science, art and technology, using the resources to hand.
- I wanted to check that pupils did not merely experience a broad curriculum, but that they made progress across a range of subjects. Pupils and staff know how well pupils are doing in each subject. This is because staff have carefully plotted the knowledge and skills appropriate to each age group across the curriculum. While avoiding excessive assessment records, staff monitor and report on how well pupils are doing against these expectations for each subject.
- Since the previous inspection, standards have risen. There has been a steady rise in pupils' progress in key stage 2 mathematics, and pupils' writing is consistently strong. Outcomes in reading over time have been more inconsistent and dipped in 2018. Over the last several years, writing has been particularly strong. I wanted to discover why. The answer is that pupils' writing across a range of subjects is given a lot of care and attention. Pupils write in books that cover not just English, but a range of subjects, and teachers' expectations of pupils' writing are high across the curriculum. As a result, pupils are very well prepared for having their work assessed. Pupils' books showed excellent improvement in their writing. They are highly motivated to gain their 'pen licence'.
- Finally, an area for improvement at the previous inspection was to ensure that school policies are applied consistently. It quickly became apparent that consistency of approach is now a hallmark of the school. Ideas that prove successful are rapidly adopted across the school. For example, the assessment ladders on display in each classroom help pupils to see their next steps. Teachers spoke enthusiastically about their joint planning across phases, and in staff meetings, the sharing of ideas and what works well.

Next steps for the school

Leaders and those responsible for governance should ensure that they:

- improve the teaching of reading across the school, so that even more pupils, and especially those that are middle attainers, make rapid progress, by:
 - providing more opportunities for pupils to read with speed and fluency
 - improving teachers' skills in supporting pupils' English language comprehension.

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

Yours sincerely

Adrian Lyons
Her Majesty's Inspector

Information about the inspection

During the inspection, I met with you, your deputy headteachers and senior leaders, groups of teachers including newly qualified teachers, the chair and members of the governing body, a representative of the local authority, and a group of pupils. Together, you and I visited all classes to observe teaching. While in class I looked at pupils' books and briefly listened to some pupils read.

I reviewed school documents about self-evaluation, development planning and safeguarding, including the single central record. I also considered the 60 responses to Ofsted's online questionnaire, Parent View, including 38 written comments.