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Mr Duncan Thorpe
Headteacher
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Dear Mr Thorpe

Short inspection of Harpole Primary School

Following my visit to the school on 16 January 2019, 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 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 lead a calm, focused and happy school. The school's values of care, respect, integrity and trust contribute well to pupils' social, moral, spiritual and cultural development. There is a strong community identity and a clear focus on nurturing pupils as individuals. You lead with a clear vision and ensure that the school's values underpin all aspects of the school's work. The leadership team works very effectively and has an accurate understanding of the school's strengths and areas for improvement. There is strong capacity for further improvement.

Parents and carers are very positive and respond warmly to your leadership. Overwhelmingly, parents who responded to the Ofsted Parent View survey feel that the school is well led and managed. One parent summarised the views of many, noting, 'Harpole is a wonderful school, with hardworking and caring staff who place the children at the top... The children are encouraged, respected and supported.'

Pupils are very proud of their school. They are welcoming, polite and respectful, and behave well. Lessons are typically focused and calm, and there is a positive working atmosphere. Pupils enthusiastically recognised the successes of many pupils in the award assembly where the achievements of others were celebrated. Those pupils who met with me commented on the importance of respect as a key value, which they believe is lived out in the school. They appreciate the opportunity to visit different places, especially different faith communities and their places of worship.

Difference is acknowledged and celebrated. One pupil commented that they are taught to appreciate diversity and equality through 'people having different looks, with the same heart.'

Governance has recently undergone change, with new governors bringing additional skills and experiences to the governing body. Governors take time to visit often and know the school well. The governing body has a clear understanding of the school's strengths and areas for improvement. Governors know, for example, that some pupils are not making sufficient progress to exceed expectations for their age in writing and mathematics by the end of key stage 2.

Leaders keep the governing body informed about the progress of disadvantaged pupils. However, governors have not evaluated how effectively the pupil premium funding has been spent to improve progress and attendance.

At the time of the previous inspection, leaders were asked to improve pupils' writing by giving pupils enough opportunities to write at length. You and your team have worked to develop the teaching of writing. Pupils' books seen during the inspection contained many examples of writing at length, with many pieces being edited and redrafted to improve the quality of writing. As a result, increasing proportions of pupils are writing at greater depth in early years and key stages 1 and 2, however not enough pupils are attaining greater depth at the end of Year 6. Pupils take a good deal of pride in their handwriting, work and workbooks. The standard of presentation is high.

Another area for improvement highlighted by the previous inspection related to raising achievement in key stage 1. Pupils' attainment at the end of Year 2 in reading, writing and mathematics has improved year on year. In 2018, the proportions of pupils attaining age-related and greater depth standards were well above national averages. However, there was a slight drop in the proportion of Year 1 pupils meeting the phonics screening check in 2018, to just below the national average. In response, leaders are monitoring the teaching of phonics more closely.

Leaders were also asked to ensure that the school's website had all the required information regarding the curriculum. This has been updated, and now provides parents with relevant and useful information about the curriculum for each class.

Safeguarding is effective.

There is a strong and effective culture of safeguarding in the school. Pupils are kept safe and safeguarding arrangements are fit for purpose. Your staff are trained and are aware of their responsibilities. They value the regular focus on safeguarding and believe the school to be a safe place for pupils. Staff make prompt referrals of any concerns using the school's reporting system. Records are clear and well maintained. As designated safeguarding leader, you follow up referrals to external agencies appropriately. You work in partnership with outside agencies to provide support for families and pupils.

Pupils who spoke with me say they are safe and are cared for. They say they are listened to and are confident that an adult will deal with their concerns swiftly. They have a clear understanding of what bullying is, and those whom I met with said that there is no bullying at the school. Pupils are taught how to be safe. This includes first aid and cardiopulmonary resuscitation (CPR), fire and road safety, as well as understanding the potential risks involved in online activity and the use of mobile phones. Parents are supported in understanding online safety for their children through e-safety links available on the school's website.

Leaders ensure that safer recruitment processes are in place and pre-employment checks of teachers and other staff are thorough. The single central record reflects a strong culture of ensuring that pupils are kept safe.

Overwhelmingly, parents who responded to the online survey, Parent View, say their children are safe and happy at the school. Likewise, all staff who responded to the staff survey believe the same. You and your staff know pupils and their families very well, and this is a strength of the school.

Inspection findings

- Leaders recognise that the provision for disadvantaged pupils is a priority for improvement. The pupil premium funding is used in a variety of ways to support disadvantaged pupils' personal development, well-being and academic learning. Support is targeted to meet individual needs and the 10-day 'Challenge X' approach links closely to classwork and is focused on reading, writing and mathematics. Disadvantaged pupils' attainment and progress become stronger as pupils journey through key stage 2, and gaps in learning diminish. Leaders have correctly identified the need to carefully monitor and evaluate, in a cohesive way, the impact of recent improvements and to check that pupils continue to make the progress that they should.
- The proportion of children in early years attaining a good level of development is consistently high and has been well above the national average for the last three years. Leadership of early years is strong and very effective. Teachers and support staff have high expectations, and these are reinforced through established routines. Resources and activities, both inside and out, are suitably planned to stimulate interest, develop skills and lead to very effective learning. Children are happy, safe and positively engaged by their learning.
- In 2018, the proportions of Year 2 pupils attaining expected standards and greater depth were well above national averages in mathematics. However, Year 6 pupils' attainment and progress indicated that some pupils underachieved in mathematics. Too few attained the higher standard in mathematics.
- Leaders with responsibility for improving mathematics have had a positive impact on the teaching of mathematics. They have provided regular training for staff, raised expectations of teachers and pupils and developed a consistent teaching approach to meet pupils' needs.
- Leaders have developed a mathematics curriculum that builds on pupils' knowledge and skills from one year to the next. As a result, pupils' learning is

well structured, and the teaching of mathematics is consistent across the school. There is clear progression and curriculum coverage over time. Pupils who met with me clearly understand the importance of developing mathematical fluency, understanding concepts, the application of mathematics and problem-solving. They commented positively on their mathematics learning.

- Current standards in key stage 2 mathematics show increasing proportions of pupils working at age-related standards in most classes, with higher proportions of pupils working at greater depth in some year groups. However, more middle- and higher-ability pupils require greater challenge to secure learning at a greater depth standard.
- Attainment in key stage 1 English, both in reading and writing in 2018, was very high. The proportions of pupils gaining age-related and greater depth standards were well above national averages. In key stage 2, the proportion attaining age-related standards was above the national average, but a lower than average proportion attained greater depth. Progress in writing across key stage 2 indicated that some Year 6 pupils did not make the progress they should have made. Leaders have identified this to be an area for improvement and are taking steps to address this.
- Those with responsibility for improving English have had a positive impact on the teaching of reading and writing. Regular staff training and developing a whole-school approach to writing is resulting in improving teaching. Teachers and support staff have high expectations and are skilled in questioning pupils. Feedback is very effective in addressing errors and misconceptions, as well as leading to next steps in learning. Pupils respond positively to the feedback. As a result, most pupils are improving their writing, however some middle- and high-ability pupils require greater support and challenge to attain greater depth.

Next steps for the school

Leaders and those responsible for governance should ensure that:

- they monitor and evaluate the effectiveness of the pupil premium funding to bring about continued improvements in provision and outcomes for disadvantaged pupils.
- improvements in writing and mathematics provision are embedded in key stage 2 to enable a greater proportion of middle- and higher-ability pupils to make more progress and exceed expected standards.

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

Yours sincerely

Chris Davies
Her Majesty's Inspector

Information about the inspection

During the inspection I met with you and leaders of literacy and numeracy. I also met with four governors, including the chair of governors.

We visited classrooms, looked at workbooks and talked with pupils in lessons. I also looked at the quality of pupils' English and mathematics books with the leaders of literacy and numeracy. I had a discussion with a group of pupils from Years 5 and 6. We considered the school's information on the progress of current pupils.

We looked at a range of documentary evidence. This included the school's evaluation of its own performance and plans for improvement. I looked at various documents related to safeguarding, including the single central record and examples of referrals made to external agencies. I met with you as designated safeguarding leader. We evaluated current rates of attendance. I also met with teachers who focus on providing support for disadvantaged pupils. I gathered the views of parents at the beginning of the school day. I also took account of 53 responses to Parent View and considered 31 free text responses, as well as 18 staff surveys and 11 pupils' surveys. I reviewed the school's website.