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Mrs Laura Pearce
Headteacher
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Dear Mrs Pearce

Short inspection of Hazelbury Primary School

Following my visit to the school on 19 March 2019 with Sarah Bailey, Ofsted Inspector, 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 your predecessor school was judged to be good in June 2013.

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 taken the school through the process of conversion to an academy. You have created an effective senior leadership team of teachers committed to improving pupils' outcomes. You have set out a clear vision for the school focused on improving teaching and learning. You have put a strong emphasis on staff well-being and professional development. Survey responses from staff clearly indicate that they appreciate your strong leadership.

Parents are positive about the school and the changes leaders are making. Leaders have high expectations of pupils' behaviour. The majority of pupils behave well in lessons, in the playgrounds and when moving around this large school. Pupils learn well and they play well together using the high-quality resources provided in the outdoor areas and in the dining halls. Pupils said that bullying is rare and that everyone gets along well. Pupils also shared with us their pride about the school's own 'Hazelbury Parliament'. This allows pupils to have their own voice in school through a democratic process, so promoting British values.

Pupils' attainment in reading, writing and mathematics is improving. However, pupils' progress in reading in key stage 2 has been below average for the last two years; the school's actions to address this formed one of my lines of enquiry for this inspection. There has been a significant improvement in attendance and this is now almost in line with the national average. Even so, persistent absence is still high.

Governors and members of the academy trust are knowledgeable and work in close partnership with the leadership team. Governors are proactive, regularly involved in school life and ambitious for its future. Key priorities for development have been accurately identified and are on display in every classroom. There is strong capacity to secure further improvements for the benefit of your school community.

Safeguarding is effective.

School leaders and governors have ensured that all safeguarding arrangements are fit for purpose, and that records are well maintained. There is a culture in the school that safeguarding is everyone's responsibility. You and your safeguarding team ensure that appropriate checks are made on all staff to ensure their suitability to work with children.

The safeguarding team knows individual pupils and families well. Your team works effectively with external agencies to ensure that, when needed, families have swift access to appropriate support services. Training for staff is regular and kept up to date. Leaders and staff were able to tell inspectors in detail about the specific safeguarding concerns in the local area, such as gang culture and knife crime.

Pupils of all ages told inspectors they feel safe and cared for in the school. They all know to whom they can report any worries or concerns. Pupils say they greatly value this support. Information about online safety is provided through workshops and in the school's curriculum. Pupils were able to give clear examples of how to stay safe online.

Inspection findings

- During our initial discussion, we agreed to look at pupils' reading as a key line of enquiry. This was because Year 6 pupils' progress in reading was significantly below the national average both in 2017 and 2018.
- Leaders have focused on the teaching and learning of reading to improve the progress of all groups of pupils. You have initiated new strategies to develop pupils' skills in reading in key stage 2. The school has invested in training and resources to ensure that pupils have high-quality learning experiences in reading. There is now a systematic approach to tracking pupils' progress, which provides consistency and greater accuracy across the school. Leaders and teachers use this information well to identify and provide extra support for pupils who need to catch up in their reading. We also found that there is now a culture of reading for pleasure in the school. Pupils all say they enjoy reading and look forward to their visits to the local library. Home-school reading records are well maintained and parents are encouraged to support their children's learning.
- Evidence from books and hearing pupils read in a wide range of classes confirms that pupils are now making stronger progress by the end of key stage 2. In Years 5 and 6, pupils have well developed comprehension skills, including the ability to make inferences to explain the meaning of some complex passages in their books. They are able to retrieve information from texts and answer increasingly challenging questions. In all cases, the books pupils read to inspectors were at an appropriate level and well matched to pupils' own interests. The majority of pupils heard were fluent readers.

- However, in Years 3 and 4 the teaching of reading was not as strong, with some inconsistency in the development of pupils' skills in interpreting texts. In some classes texts were not accurately matched to pupils' abilities. As a result, some pupils could not read or answer the questions posed and progress was weak.
- The second line of enquiry focused on the effectiveness of phonics teaching. This was because there was a significant dip in the proportion of pupils who achieved the expected standard in the Year 1 phonics screening check in 2018.
- Leaders have introduced a systematic approach to the teaching of phonics across the school, supported by staff training. This starts with exposure to sounds and letters for two- and three-year-olds and in the Nursery Year. By the time they leave the Reception Year, many children now have the necessary decoding skills to read simple, age-appropriate words.
- The picture is less secure in key stage 1. Where phonics activities match children's level of understanding, learning is brisk and progress is evident. In Year 1, for example, some pupils can use their knowledge of letters and sounds well to spell and read increasingly difficult words. At times, however, some groups of pupils are given words and sentences that they cannot read and this limits their progress. Additional adults are not always used precisely enough in lessons to support middle- and lower-ability pupils to achieve as well as possible in learning phonics. Leaders have now made provision for additional lessons and support is given to pupils who still need to pass their phonics screening check in Year 2.
- The final key line of enquiry concerned pupils' rates of attendance. In recent years, both absence and persistent absence were well above average.
- School leaders have made it a priority to tackle these important issues. The school is sensitive to the needs of its community but equally strong in challenging non-attendance. There is a strong team in place in this school, supported by the academy trust. A number of successful initiatives have been implemented, including a mixture of rewards and sanctions. Pupils' attendance is monitored on a daily basis and tracked carefully. Attendance records are thorough and maintained to a high standard.
- As a result, attendance has improved significantly so that it is now approaching the national average. Persistent absenteeism, however, still remains high and further work needs to be done in this area. Governors are well informed about these issues and are determined to drive forward even greater improvement.

Next steps for the school

Leaders and those responsible for governance should ensure that:

- leaders continue to raise pupils' attainment and progress in reading across the school
- strategies for teaching phonics are consistently applied so that more pupils meet the expected standard in the phonics screening check in Year 1.

I am copying this letter to the chair of the board of trustees and the chief executive officer of the multi-academy trust, the regional schools commissioner and the director of children's services for Enfield. This letter will be published on the Ofsted website.

Yours sincerely

Sean Flood
Ofsted Inspector

Information about the inspection

Inspectors held discussions with you and other senior and middle leaders. Inspectors also held meetings with the chair of the governing body and the chief executive officer of the academy trust. Inspectors also spoke with parents in the playground before school and with pupils, both in class and in structured settings. Inspectors listened to a wide range of readers from across the school. Inspectors visited the provision for two-year-olds and the Nursery Year. Inspectors observed pupils' behaviour in class, in the playground, at lunchtime and as they made their way around the school. Inspectors reviewed pupils' work and also observed teaching in a range of classes, jointly with senior leaders. A wide range of documentation was evaluated, including case studies, school surveys, the school's self-evaluation and information relating to safeguarding, behaviour and attendance. Inspectors considered the responses of 44 parents to Parent View and 108 responses to the staff survey.