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3 May 2019

Mrs Margaret Coleman  
Interim Executive Headteacher  
Harlands Primary School  
Mallard Drive  
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East Sussex  
TN22 5PW

Dear Mrs Coleman

### **Short inspection of Harlands Primary School**

Following my visit to the school on 25 April 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 April 2015.

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

The leadership team has maintained the good quality of education in the school since the last inspection. On joining the school as interim executive headteacher in December 2017, you quickly established a strong and convincing vision to stabilise the leadership of the school. You, ably supported by the interim head of school, have brought an increased sense of urgency and pace to school improvement. Together, you make sure that pupils are taught well and their well-being is looked after closely. Parents, carers and staff are highly supportive of your leadership and the improvements being made. One parent, echoing the views of many, commented: 'Above all there is a genuine feeling of inclusivity within the school, and the school's efforts to nurture academic progress hand in hand with their pupils' welfare and well-being is highly commendable.'

Staff understand and share your ambitious vision. They value the opportunities they are given to develop their professional skills successfully. Staff morale is high, with them greatly appreciating your efforts to reduce their workload. Subject leaders are clear about how their work is making an impact on pupils' learning. A strong sense of common purpose and commitment to improve resonates throughout the school.

Your evaluation of the school's effectiveness is accurate. Like you, governors have a clear vision and are committed to building on the improvements you have already put in place. To this end, they have successfully appointed a new headteacher, who will join the school in September 2019. The governing body provides appropriate support and challenge to school leaders. Governors ensure that they are trained well with the correct knowledge to carry out their statutory responsibilities. The

local authority has been instrumental in providing well-targeted support to the school over the last couple of years, which continues at the appropriate level.

Pupils are settled and happy in the school. They say that the school is a place where 'we are cared for'. They learn in a calm, organised and well-structured environment where routines are securely established. Impressive displays of pupils' work line corridors and classrooms, bringing alive the wide variety of activities and subjects the school offers. Pupils relish the opportunities that they are given to contribute responsibly to the life of the school. For example, Year 6 pupils enjoy supporting children in Reception and aspire to be part of the 'learning evaluation group', where they are encouraged to play an active role in school improvement.

All parents who responded to Ofsted's online questionnaire Parent View and parents spoken to during the inspection were positive about their children's progress and school experience. Levels of trust between staff and parents are high, as illustrated by this comment from a parent: 'Any concerns raised are dealt with the same day and the communication has always been exemplary.'

At the time of the last inspection, you were asked to make sure that pupils' phonics and spelling skills improved. Performance information for 2018 shows that the proportion of pupils who achieved the phonics test in Year 1 rose significantly from the previous year and is now above the national average. In 2018, at the end of key stage 2, a higher proportion of pupils achieved the expected and the higher standard in the English grammar, punctuation and spelling test than in the previous year. Nonetheless, you have continued to make writing and spelling a focus on the school development plan this year.

You were also asked to improve teaching to ensure that pupils are moved onto challenging tasks more quickly and that teaching assistants have the appropriate skills to support pupils effectively. Your work to improve the teaching of mathematics across the school has been highly successful, with higher than national average outcomes at the expected and the higher standard at the end of key stage 2 in 2018. Teachers provide appropriate levels of challenge in mathematics, and pupils say this approach helps them make progress. Your continued work to improve teaching in other subjects is firmly underway and work in pupils' books shows teachers have increasingly high expectations for pupils' achievement. Teaching assistants provide highly effective support for a range of different pupils in class and for smaller groups. You recognise that there is more work to do to ensure that all teaching is as strong as the best in the school.

### **Safeguarding is effective.**

The leadership team and governors ensure that all safeguarding arrangements are fit for purpose. You undertake regular safeguarding reviews and have made sure that recommendations have been followed up. Governors are thorough in checking the work of leaders and visit the school to assure themselves that safeguarding records and processes are fit for purpose.

You make sure that all staff receive appropriate training. Regular meetings ensure that staff are kept up to date with safeguarding information. Staff know pupils well, so they are alert to any concerns. They report these assiduously, and they are swiftly followed up by school leaders.

You work closely with the relevant agencies to ensure that the right support is made available to vulnerable pupils and their families. You use funding wisely, giving highly personalised provision for pupils when necessary. Pupils who may be vulnerable receive targeted support and a place where they can talk and share their worries. All staff feel that pupils are safe in the school. Pupils say they feel safe and have confidence in staff to help them if there are any problems. This all contributes to a caring and safe school environment where pupils can thrive.

### **Inspection findings**

- During this inspection, we looked closely at specific aspects of the school's provision, including: the effectiveness of the teaching of reading and writing; provision to ensure that disadvantaged pupils achieve well; provision for the most able pupils; and how the wider curriculum develops pupils' knowledge, skills and understanding.
- The teaching of reading and writing is a top priority across the school. Skilled teaching and the use of interesting class texts ensure that pupils are introduced to a wide range of vocabulary and grammar. For example, during the inspection pupils were learning the meaning of words such as 'devious' and 'smirk'. Pupils write often, being encouraged and supported effectively to improve their work regularly. Pupils successfully use their 'thought journals' and vocabulary books across all subjects to develop their learning. As a result, the quality of writing is improving.
- You are aware that in 2018 some of the most able pupils did not achieve highly enough in reading, writing and mathematics at the end of key stage 1 and key stage 2. This is sensibly a priority on your school development plan. Work in pupils' books shows that teachers increasingly provide work that challenges and deepens pupils' understanding. This is particularly evident in mathematics. Subject leaders are building on this success, working effectively together to ensure that expectations are consistently high across all subjects.
- The low numbers of disadvantaged pupils are currently making strong progress. They receive highly effective support from teachers, teaching assistants and leaders to help them catch up with others. You and your senior leaders carefully track the progress of this group of pupils and monitor interventions regularly to check their impact. Provision for pupils' welfare is admirable. The care and support pupils receive helps them make the progress of which they are capable.
- The curriculum provides many exciting opportunities to enliven learning. These include studying interesting topics and making links to high-quality texts and other subjects where appropriate. For example, when pupils learned about the Victorians, they read 'Street Child' to provide a broader context about this period of history and created a recipe for gruel using ratio and proportion in mathematics. The teaching of science is a strength. Pupils have many

opportunities to develop their skills of scientific enquiry, through taking part in regular science experiments. Pupils and parents value the recently improved trips, which successfully support and deepen pupils' learning in the classroom.

- Subject leaders work effectively on their individual curriculum areas but also more widely as part of a group of local schools to ensure that expectations remain high in all areas of the curriculum. You recognise that further work is needed to ensure that the sequencing of lessons provides pupils with the skills and knowledge that they need to make the best possible progress. This work is securely underway.

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

Leaders and those responsible for governance should ensure that:

- they continue to develop subject leaders' effectiveness to further improve teaching and the curriculum
- they increase the proportion of pupils attaining higher standards in reading and writing at the end of key stages 1 and 2.

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

Yours sincerely

Frances Nation  
**Her Majesty's Inspector**

### **Information about the inspection**

I met with you, the interim head of school, the special educational needs co-ordinator and three subject leaders. I held a discussion with the chair and vice-chair of governors. I had a telephone conversation with a representative from the local authority. Together with the interim head of school we visited all classes. I considered 22 responses to Ofsted's staff questionnaire, together with 108 responses to Ofsted's online survey for pupils. I spoke directly to some parents at the start of the school day and considered 29 responses to Ofsted's online questionnaire Parent View, including 39 free-text comments. I met with a group of pupils from Year 1 to Year 6 and heard them read. I talked to pupils informally about their learning and scrutinised work in pupils' books. I analysed a range of documentation, including information about safeguarding and your evaluation of the school's effectiveness.