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Mrs Victoria Forbes
Principal
Harris Primary Academy Benson
West Way
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Dear Mrs Forbes

Short inspection of Harris Primary Academy Benson

Following my visit to the school on 5 June 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 June 2015.

This school continues to be good.

The leadership team has maintained the good quality of education in the school since the last inspection. Based on the evidence gathered during this short inspection, I am of the opinion that the school has demonstrated strong practice and marked improvement in specific areas. This may indicate that the school has improved significantly overall. Therefore, I am recommending that the school's next inspection be a section 5 inspection.

Since the previous inspection you, your leadership team and governing body have worked relentlessly to drive improvements in the standard of education provided in the school. As a team, you have focused on consolidating and enhancing the school's strengths and have addressed those areas identified as requiring further development.

You have established a culture of high aspirations for all, underpinned by effective systems and structures. You are unwavering in your commitment to pupils' academic, emotional and creative development. The school's core values of 'show respect; take responsibility; make the right choice' were evident in the lessons and the assembly I visited, as well as when I spoke to pupils in the playground.

Middle leaders have had a pivotal role in driving up standards. You ensure that these leaders are given the necessary skills and ownership to lead their subjects effectively. They have helped to ensure that pupils make good progress.

Consequently, they feel empowered and benefit from the strong challenge and support provided by your senior leadership team. All of the staff who responded to the staff survey said that the school is well led and managed.

The school is calm and well ordered. The conduct of pupils is exemplary. Pupils are welcoming, well-mannered and polite. They interact with each other and staff in a relaxed and supportive manner. Their positive attitudes to learning make a strong contribution to their progress in the classroom. Pupils whose behaviour is more vulnerable are supported well through a variety of nurturing interventions, such as the 'forest class' and meditation room.

At the last inspection, you were asked to improve communications with parents and carers, so as to keep them fully informed of the school's work. The majority of parents I spoke with were very positive about the school. At the start of the school day staff are ready to welcome the pupils and their parents. The 'open door' policy is much appreciated by parents. There are now numerous opportunities for parents to learn with their children, and to learn how to support them. One parent commented, 'The leadership team is extremely kind, compassionate and well organised.' The large majority of parents who responded to Parent View, Ofsted's online questionnaire, feel that their children are well looked after and make good progress. Almost all reported that they would recommend the school to another parent. However, a few parents commented that the school could still do more to improve its communication with them.

Safeguarding is effective.

The leadership team, including governors, gives pupils' safety an appropriately high priority. You have ensured that all safeguarding arrangements are fit for purpose and records are detailed and of high quality. All checks and procedures for recruiting staff safely are carried out and recorded diligently. All school staff receive timely and high-quality training to ensure that they are confident in applying the school's policies and guidance in relation to safeguarding issues.

Pupils have a good understanding of how to keep themselves safe in a range of situations. They demonstrate an appropriate knowledge of different types of bullying including verbal, physical and cyber bullying. They say that bullying rarely happens at the school. Pupils talk knowledgeably about the opportunities that they have to learn about staying safe online. They told me that they feel confident that all pupils from different backgrounds and cultures are accepted by their peers.

They speak confidently about being able to approach any staff within school if they have any concerns. Leaders have identified that even more could be done to increase pupils' awareness of the risks associated with extremism and radicalisation.

Inspection findings

- We first agreed to look at how leaders had secured consistently strong achievement at key stage 2, particularly with disadvantaged pupils. Lessons have

a sharp focus on explicit objectives; new approaches in mathematics have had considerable impact on pupils' progress predicated on number strength and mastery. In our visits to lessons and the work in pupils' books shows a strong focus on reasoning and problem-solving techniques. Pupils enjoy working at deeper levels of understanding, exemplified when one pupil in a Year 6 class told me, 'When it's challenging, I can get better.'

- Evidence from visits to classrooms, scrutiny of pupils' books and work on display around school showed that the quality of writing in the school is a particular strength. You have clearly prioritised the early teaching of phonics. You ensure that teachers and teaching assistants have targeted training, so that the teaching of phonics is strong throughout the school, starting in the Reception Year.
- This emphasis on writing continues as pupils move up through the school, with frequent opportunities to apply their writing skills. Together with objectives, teachers provide clear explanations and guidance which help pupils to write imaginatively, using well-chosen vocabulary and grammar. The wider curriculum at key stage 2 further promotes extended writing and pupils demonstrate stamina and resilience in redrafting and editing their work. Consequently, evidence shows that all groups of pupils make swift progress, including disadvantaged pupils, the most able and pupils with special educational needs and/or disabilities.
- Leaders and teachers ensure that reading has a high profile across the school. Pupils read to me fluently, with meaning and expression. They enjoy reading, and select books from an increasing range of favourite authors, and rise to the challenge of more sophisticated reading choices.
- As part of an area for improvement, you were also asked to check pupils' corrections of careless errors in lessons. Teachers have now developed precise ways to check pupils' understanding. In most classes, teachers routinely provide pupils with feedback in line with the school's policy, so pupils know how to make improvements to their work. The information gathered is used to provide additional interventions for any pupils who are falling behind, or to set additional, challenging targets for the most able pupils.
- I wanted to check what the school was doing to promote the number of pupils achieving at a greater depth by the end of Year 2. Senior leaders hold regular 'week in learning' meetings with staff, to review the progress of pupils in their classes. These meetings provide leaders with a strategic view of pupils' achievement. Teachers use these meetings and additional reflections to modify their teaching and interventions to address any areas of underachievement. You showed me that the proportion of pupils achieving at greater depth in 2019 has improved considerably.

Next steps for the school

Leaders and those responsible for governance should ensure that:

- the school strengthens its relationships with parents who have yet to engage with the opportunities it presents.

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

Yours sincerely

Jacques Szemalikowski
Ofsted Inspector

Information about the inspection

During the inspection, I met with you, your leadership team, and middle leaders. I looked at the responses to the Ofsted staff survey. I met with two representatives from the federation, and the chair of the governing body.

I met with a group of Year 5 and 6 pupils, talked with pupils at break and lunchtime, and looked at the responses to the Ofsted pupil survey. I spoke to a number of parents at the school gate and took account of comments in response to Ofsted's online survey, Parent View.

I looked at a range of pupils' work. You accompanied me on visits to classrooms where together we observed teaching and learning, spoke with pupils and looked further at their work. I attended an assembly. I listened to pupils from Year 2 and Year 5 read. I examined a range of documentation related to safeguarding, including the single central record of recruitment checks, samples of records and professional training certificates.

I looked at external reports evaluating the work of the school. I scrutinised the school's website and reviewed information about pupils' progress, attainment and attendance. I also considered the school's self-evaluation of how well it is doing, its improvement priorities and assessment information for current pupils.