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Mrs Sarah Leighton
Headteacher
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Dear Mrs Leighton

Short inspection of Hughenden Primary School

Following my visit to the school on 15 March 2017, 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 2013.

This school continues to be good.

The leadership team has maintained the good quality of education in the school since the last inspection. Together with your other leaders, and governors, you have successfully managed a period of considerable change as the school has grown. You have ensured that this change has not distracted you from your clear focus on developing the quality of teaching and raising standards. Your capable middle and senior leaders and governors support you well by establishing a culture of high ambition for pupils. These leaders have high expectations for the quality of teaching in the areas for which they have responsibility. Subject leaders use their expertise to swiftly tackle weaknesses effectively. They provide good advice and support to staff as well as having informative meetings with governors who hold them to account for their work and their impact on pupils' learning.

Pupils say that they enjoy being part of the school's community. They are typically thoughtful and attentive and have positive attitudes to school. Pupils generally behave well in lessons and around the school and work with sustained concentration. Pupils benefit from an interesting and stimulating curriculum, evident in their work in every classroom. For instance, this was seen in Year 3 where pupils were well motivated by exploring exciting sources of historical evidence when learning about Howard Carter and the Ancient Egyptian way of life. Pupils learn a broad and balanced range of subjects, which include French.

At the last inspection, leaders were asked to improve pupils' spelling and to ensure

that pupils understand how well they are making progress. English leaders have introduced a helpful scheme for the teaching of phonics and reading. This, coupled with the chosen school-wide approach to spelling, has helped to quickly improve pupils' spelling skills. Teachers and teaching assistants adeptly make sure that pupils know what standard they are working at and what they need to do to improve their work. Your systematic approach to the teaching of writing has raised standards in pupils' written work in English. However, although the quality of pupils' writing is good, the most able pupils are not consistently challenged to write at length or in detail, to extend their success appropriately. Leaders are developing the teaching of mathematics carefully and effectively. However, occasionally mathematics teaching does not challenge pupils enough.

Safeguarding is effective.

The leadership team has ensured that all safeguarding arrangements are fit for purpose. Records are detailed and of high quality, reflecting the deep culture of safeguarding at the school. Staff work closely with outside agencies when necessary and liaise with them quickly to keep pupils safe. Staff have secure knowledge and understanding of current guidance and procedures because of effective regular training and updates. The school works closely and successfully with parents and the local authority as well as health professionals, to make sure that pupils' needs are fully understood and met. Pupils receive effective guidance on how to stay safe online through themed events, such as internet safety week, and through regular updates and reminders.

Inspection findings

- During the inspection I focused on how well the most able pupils, especially girls, are developing their writing skills. I also explored how well middle-attaining pupils are currently achieving in writing. In addition, I examined the school's work to promote progress in mathematics in key stage 2 and the standards reached by pupils who need to catch up in mathematics in key stage 1. I looked at the proportion of children reaching a good level of development in the early years and those reaching the required standard in phonics by the end of Year 1.
- Pupils' writing in books evidences strong rates of progress. Girls make similar progress to boys, and disadvantaged pupils make good progress. Teachers have successfully adapted the way they help pupils improve their writing to promote good progress. They discuss helpful ideas and important writing features in detail with pupils, and provide numerous opportunities for pupils to practise their writing skills in a wide range of styles. In Year 4, this was illustrated in helpful discussion of the story of 'The Hughenden ridgeback'.
- Staff encourage pupils to use their writing skills widely in different subjects. For example, in Year 6 pupils skilfully write in subjects such as science, history and geography using features, including paragraphs, to organise their writing clearly. However, teachers' expectations are not consistently high, particularly for the most able pupils. A times, these pupils are not challenged to write in detail, or at length, as well as they are able to.

- Middle-attaining pupils throughout the school reach standards in writing that are broadly in line with expectations for their age. The school's rigorous and systematic approach for checking the quality of pupils' writing has ensured that pupils have made accelerated progress this school year. Consequently, standards are rising quickly. Pupils usually present their work neatly.
- Leaders and teachers are using the school's comprehensive assessment system in mathematics rigorously. Teachers usually provide an appropriate level of challenge in mathematics, including for the most able pupils. Most pupils make rapid progress because they are provided with a good range of opportunities that match their abilities, with teaching targeted accurately at pupils' different stages of understanding.
- Test results in 2016 showed that pupils in Year 6 had made less progress in mathematics than expected nationally. Governors and school leaders have addressed this decisively. You swiftly put in place effective measures to address apparent weaknesses, including the introduction of daily mathematics problem-solving learning opportunities. This, combined with frequent investigations into mathematical ideas, including number patterns, has improved pupils' progress.
- Pupils who need to catch up in mathematics in key stage 1 achieve well. Methodical new resources are supporting pupils well to understand number in more depth and with greater clarity and to accurately apply their knowledge of calculation strategies. In a Year 1 lesson, for example, pupils showed they had gained a good understanding of place value because resources illustrated very clearly to them how many tens were in a number.
- Teachers in key stage 1 usually check pupils' understanding at regular intervals during mathematics lessons to ensure that any misunderstandings are quickly and effectively tackled. However, this strength in teaching is not consistently apparent, so there are occasions when teachers' questions do not make pupils think hard enough and move them on quickly in their learning.
- Pupils of all ages and abilities enjoy reading. Younger pupils, and those at the early stages of learning to read in key stage 1, confidently and successfully use the phonics strategies that the school has taught them. Staff select books that challenge pupils' reading skills appropriately, ensuring that pupils are motivated to make rapid progress. Older pupils, and the most able readers among the younger pupils, read with fluency and expression. They also develop a good understanding of the meaning of a range of suitably challenging texts. In a Year 5 lesson, a group of pupils reading 'Fools gold' successfully explored the meaning of words such as 'gullible' and 'over-exaggeration' in order to fully understand the description of a character.
- The proportion of children in the early years that reached a good level of development in 2016 was below the national average. You have tackled previous weaknesses in the setting well and improved teaching, so that children are now making better progress. In the Reception Year children now access a good breadth of learning opportunities, both in the classroom and in the outside area. Staff have also set higher expectations for children's progress, including raising the proportion expected to exceed a good level of development at the end of the year. Current school assessments and children's work show that the proportion of

children achieving a good level of development in 2017 is likely to be higher than in 2016, marking improvement in children's outcomes.

Next steps for the school

Leaders and those responsible for governance should ensure that:

- where necessary, teachers raise their expectations for the length and detail of pupils' writing, particularly for the most able
- teachers' questions consistently check and challenge pupils' thinking, to promote their rapid progress.

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

Yours sincerely

Richard Blackmore
Ofsted Inspector

Information about the inspection

During the inspection I had discussions with you and a wide range of other leaders, two governors and a local authority representative. I spoke with pupils, observed them learning and looked at their workbooks. I spoke with parents as they collected their children at the end of the school day and at the start of the day. I evaluated a range of school documentation, including leaders' evaluation of the school's effectiveness, the school's action plans, information about pupils' progress, a range of school policies and safeguarding records. I took account of 50 responses from parents to Ofsted's online survey, Parent View, and one letter.