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Mrs Pat Kerton
Headteacher
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Dear Mrs Kerton

Short inspection of The Hawthorns Primary School

Following my visit to the school on 3 May 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. In the last four years there have been significant changes to staffing. Working closely with other school leaders, you have developed an effective leadership structure that focuses rightly on teamwork and shared accountability. You understand clearly the school's many strengths but also know that there are still areas to work on, such as pupils' progress in writing at key stage 2. You set high expectations of pupils and staff and have established a culture of 'being the best you can be'. Consequently, leaders are highly ambitious for each and every pupil, with a clear emphasis on developing the whole child.

Staff know pupils well and parents appreciate the individual care and support that their children receive. One parent said: 'My child loves going to school. He is fully supported by the staff, who encourage him to be the best he can be at everything. It's a very positive learning environment.'

All staff and governors work hard to achieve the school's vision: 'belong, believe, achieve and grow'. Pupils are proud of their school. They work hard, are confident and appreciate the good learning opportunities that the school provides. Relationships between staff and pupils are excellent and this helps pupils to make good progress. One pupil said, 'The teachers really care about what you do.'

At the time of the last inspection, inspectors highlighted good teaching, outstanding behaviour and above-average attainment. These aspects remain strengths. Inspectors asked you to raise further the quality of teaching. Teachers carefully assess pupils' work and provide useful suggestions that make pupils think more deeply. As a result, pupils are clear about what they need to do to further develop their skills. Pupils are given a range of opportunities to write in different styles. However, some teachers do not have high enough expectations of the presentation of pupils' work. As a result, some pupils do not take sufficient pride in their handwriting and presentation.

In 2016, pupils' attainment in key stage 2 exceeded that seen nationally. Pupils in key stage 2 make excellent progress in reading and mathematics. Their progress in writing was slower, although in line with the national average. Since September, you have taken decisive action to address this, including introducing changes to the way you teach writing. Your swift action has ensured that pupils are now making good progress in writing.

Safeguarding is effective.

The leadership team has ensured that all safeguarding arrangements are fit for purpose and records are detailed and of a high quality. Safeguarding pupils effectively is at the heart of the school's work. All parents that completed the online questionnaire stated that their child feels safe. Many parents describe the school as, 'caring', 'nurturing' and 'a close-knit community'.

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. Pupils can confidently explain what to do if they see something on their computer that makes them feel uneasy. All pupils feel valued and equality of opportunity is strongly promoted. Pupils agree that they feel safe in school as they are confident there is always someone to talk to if they ever have a problem.

All school staff receive timely and high-quality training to ensure that they are confident applying the school's policies and guidance in relation to child protection issues. Governors keep an effective oversight of safeguarding matters.

Inspection findings

- During this inspection, we looked closely at specific aspects of the school's provision including the effectiveness of safeguarding arrangements; the progress of particular groups in writing, including the most able and disadvantaged pupils; and how well leaders have ensured that the school has continued to improve pupils' progress in reading, writing and mathematics.
- The school is rightly focusing on further raising pupils' achievement in writing. In 2016, the proportion of pupils who made expected progress was in line with the national average. Leaders have reorganised the school's writing curriculum so that it securely meets the higher expectations that are required. As a result, standards are rising.

- Leaders' focus on raising standards in writing is contributing well to accelerating the progress of the most able pupils. You monitor pupils' progress closely. Pupils, including the most able, are developing their skills well such as their use of complex punctuation. You have introduced new teaching methods to improve the level of challenge provided to all pupils. Current assessment information shows that a greater proportion of the most able pupils are on track to make more rapid progress in writing.
- Leaders have established a clear strategy to ensure that pupils who have special educational needs and/or disabilities, disadvantaged pupils and pupils from minority ethnic backgrounds achieve well. Staff work closely with you to identify pupils' individual needs and provide support quickly if necessary. You have established a detailed assessment system that shows the majority of pupils are making good progress in reading, writing and mathematics.
- The teaching of phonics is effective. You have provided high-quality training for all staff to ensure that pupils who need to catch up receive prompt and effective support. More pupils are already working at the expected standard in phonics than at this point last year. Pupils make good use of their phonics knowledge to support their reading and writing.

Next steps for the school

Leaders and those responsible for governance should ensure that:

- pupils' progress in writing in key stage 2 further accelerates
- teachers' expectations are raised so that pupils take greater pride in the presentation of their written work.

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

Yours sincerely

David Harris
Ofsted Inspector

Information about the inspection

I met with you, the two deputy headteachers and staff. We discussed the school's self-evaluation. Together, we visited in 10 classes. I scrutinised pupils' work. I also held discussions with two governors, including the chair of the governing body, and talked informally to pupils in lessons. A meeting was held with a representative from the local authority. I analysed a range of school documentation, including information about pupils' achievement, governors' minutes, the school improvement plan, and safeguarding checks, policies and procedures. I took into account the views of 143 parents who responded to the Parent View online survey.