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Miss Maria Ackland
Headteacher
Horndean Church of England Junior School
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Dear Miss Ackland

Short inspection of Horndean Church of England Junior School

Following my visit to the school on 14 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 March 2012.

This school continues to be good.

The leadership team has maintained the good quality of education in the school since the last inspection. You have addressed the issues that were identified as areas for improvement at the previous inspection. The school's 'TLC' values of 'thinking with thanksgiving, learning with love and caring with compassion' underpin all of the school's work. Everyone understands their significance and strives to live by them. Leaders have made sure that pupils are well cared for, taught well and encouraged to achieve their best. One parent commented: 'Pupils' efforts in class have always been rewarded, spurring them on to continue doing well. I can't praise the school, its staff and leadership team highly enough.' The very large majority of parents support this view, although a small minority are less positive.

Together with your deputy and assistant headteacher, you have led the school with determination. When the school's expectations of continuing good results in the 2016 end-of-key-stage-2 national assessments were not realised, you acted promptly and decisively. This had an immediate positive impact on standards in the school. For example, pupils currently in Year 6 read fluently and know what is expected of them in the forthcoming assessments. However, you recognise that there is still work to be done to ensure that disadvantaged pupils make the same rapid progress in all year groups that they are making in some. In addition, there is still work to do to ensure that this group and some pupils who have special educational needs and/or disabilities attend regularly.

Leaders have done much work to improve the quality of teaching by offering staff the opportunity to develop their skills. You have always given due consideration to the well-being of staff when making decisions and the overwhelming majority of staff are proud to be a member of this school's team. Governors know the school well and offer incisive challenge and support to ensure that it continues to improve.

The school is a calm and happy place for pupils. They flourish on positive relationships, behave well and are kind to each other. Lessons are interesting, purposeful and provide challenging activities to help pupils achieve well. The school provides many opportunities for pupils to participate in a range of sports and has achieved some notable successes. Recently, the school's athletics team was a runner-up in the 'team of the year' category at the regional sports awards. There are also opportunities for pupils to learn a range of musical instruments and be involved in the performing arts. All of the pupils who responded said that they would recommend the school to a friend.

Safeguarding is effective.

The leadership team has ensured that all safeguarding arrangements are fit for purpose and records are detailed and of high quality. There is a clear safeguarding culture in the school that places the well-being of pupils at the heart of its work. All adults are trained and are clear about what to do if they have any concerns. There are strict procedures to make sure that adults are carefully vetted so that no unsuitable people are able to work in the school. Leaders work closely with external agencies if they need advice or support with children who are at risk of harm. Governors play an important role in checking on key aspects of the school's safeguarding work and regularly talk to pupils, making sure that they feel safe.

Pupils are safe and are taught to stay safe in a range of situations, including online. Pupils are confident that there is always an adult that they can approach with any worries. They say that bullying is rare, but when it does happen it is quickly dealt with. Pupils also take seriously their responsibility of caring for each other and treating everyone with respect. They quickly pointed out that the school's 'TLC' values pervade every aspect of school life. I was reminded of this regularly throughout the inspection.

Inspection findings

- Together, we looked closely at pupils' achievement in mathematics. After several years of above-average results, Year 6 pupils' attainment dipped in the 2016 key stage 2 assessments, especially in mathematics. Leaders worked hard to understand the reasons for this decline and enlisted the support and expertise of the local authority. It was identified that the school's mathematics curriculum had been too narrowly focused on arithmetic. This left pupils without the skills to be able to apply their knowledge in problem-solving and reasoning activities. Leaders immediately arranged training for teachers and learning support assistants to enable them to teach the new mathematics curriculum more confidently and effectively. In the light of detailed evaluation by leaders and

governors, further training was provided on specific aspects of mathematics.

- Attainment in mathematics of pupils currently in Year 6 shows marked improvement. Pupils are now familiar with the kinds of questions they will face in the assessments in the summer and tackle them with confidence. Mathematical reasoning now permeates lessons and pupils are able to apply their learning to solve more challenging problems. When pupils struggle or make mistakes they understand that this is an opportunity to develop resilience and deepen their learning. Work seen in mathematics books demonstrates that they are now making rapid progress.
- Teachers now plan lessons in all subjects based on a thorough understanding of what pupils have achieved and what they need to do next to advance their learning. When pupils are at risk of falling behind, extra teaching is swiftly put in place to help them keep up. Furthermore, when a teacher anticipates that a pupil may struggle with a lesson, time is taken to help them become familiar with the subject even before it is taught to the whole class. This is particularly helpful for pupils who have special educational needs and/or disabilities. Detailed assessments of pupils' learning are having a positive impact on the strong progress they are making. As a result, a large majority of pupils in the school are on track to achieve at the expected level at the end of this year in reading, writing and mathematics. The progress of pupils who have special educational needs and/or disabilities is improving.
- While pupils' progress in the school is much improved, outcomes for disadvantaged pupils are still variable. In some year groups they achieve well, making more rapid progress than other pupils, but this is not so in all year groups or classes. You recognise that this is something that leaders still need to improve.
- We looked closely at attendance. Leaders work hard to engage with parents and form positive, productive relationships. You make sure that you are a visible presence at the start of the day and this helps to emphasise the importance of regular school attendance for pupils. Overall, attendance is high and is improving this year. Levels of persistent absence are falling. There are still a few disadvantaged pupils and pupils who have special educational needs and/or disabilities who are persistently absent. You also recognise that this is something that leaders need to improve.

Next steps for the school

Leaders and those responsible for governance should ensure that:

- disadvantaged pupils make the same strong progress in all year groups
- the rate of persistent absence among disadvantaged pupils and pupils who have special educational needs and/or disabilities is reduced.

I am copying this letter to the chair of the governing body, the director of education for the Diocese of Portsmouth, the regional schools commissioner and the director

of children's services for Hampshire. This letter will be published on the Ofsted website.

Yours sincerely

Bruce Waelend
Ofsted Inspector

Information about the inspection

During the inspection, we visited most classes in the school. I met with all staff during the morning briefing meeting. I undertook a careful check of the school's single central register and associated files. I spoke with four parents at the start of the school day and considered the views of a further 52 parents posted on Ofsted's online survey, Parent View. I also considered the views of 23 pupils and 18 members of staff who completed online surveys. I viewed a range of documents including: the self-evaluation of the school's performance; the school improvement plan; the 10-week plan implemented in November 2016; information regarding pupils' achievement and attendance and a number of school policies. I reviewed pupils' safeguarding and welfare arrangements and documentation. Together with the leader of mathematics we reviewed a sample of the work of pupils across the school. I listened to pupils from Year 6 read. I spoke to some staff that I met around the school. I spoke to pupils in the playground and in their lessons. I met with the vice-chair of the governing body and four governors. I had a telephone conversation with a representative of the local authority.