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Mr Daryl Jones
Headteacher
Hardwick Primary School
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Dear Mr Jones

Short inspection of Hardwick Primary School

Following my visit to the school on 9 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 July 2013.

This school continues to be good.

The leadership team has maintained the good quality of education at the school since the last inspection. You have worked effectively with other school leaders to maintain a culture of high expectation alongside a caring and nurturing ethos. The school is characterised by the positive way in which pupils and staff engage with each other and with their learning. Pupils enjoy school and staff say that they are proud to work there. Those parents who I spoke to during this inspection, and the vast majority who responded to Parent View, believe that their children are taught well and make good progress at the school.

Governance is effective. Governors provide good levels of support and challenge to senior leaders. They are knowledgeable about the school's performance and understand well the community that it serves. Governors visit the school regularly to see for themselves how policies are put into practice.

The school has a strong commitment to sport and the performing arts. Pupils have the opportunity to take part in a wide variety of clubs ranging from hockey to cookery. Staff run football teams for boys and girls, from the Reception Year to Year 6, and regularly have over 60 pupils participating in competitive sport at weekends. The school choir also performs regularly in the local community and all pupils are involved in an end-of-term production each year.

At your previous inspection, in July 2013, you were asked to improve attendance and further improve the quality of teaching and learning. You have made good progress in addressing each of these areas. Attendance has improved and the work seen in books shows that pupils across the school are making good progress in their learning, particularly in writing and mathematics.

The school continues to host a Communication Centre for up to 15 key stage 1 pupils from across the local authority who have speech, language and communication difficulties. Staff work closely with speech and language therapists to understand and meet the needs of these pupils. Staff make careful assessments of pupils' progress and the work they do ensures that the vast majority transfer successfully into mainstream schools by the time they start in key stage 2.

Safeguarding is effective.

Safeguarding arrangements are fit for purpose and records are detailed and of a high quality. Policies and records are checked regularly to ensure that they comply with current requirements and regular training has ensured that staff and governors fully understand their responsibilities for keeping pupils safe. The school keeps precise records of the checks that are made on adults before they are appointed at the school. As a result of these actions, pupils say they feel safe while in school and the vast majority of parents agree.

Governors ensure that they attend relevant training and fully understand their role in ensuring that appropriate safeguards are in place to protect children.

Inspection findings

- In order to establish whether the school had remained good, I followed a number of lines of enquiry during this inspection. I considered whether the quality of teaching was effective as the improvement of teaching was a key issue from the previous inspection. I also looked at whether attendance had improved as this was also an area identified as requiring improvement at the previous inspection. I looked closely at the progress that pupils make across key stage 1 as the results were below average in 2016. I also looked at the progress pupils make in key stage 2 as the school has a Year 6 for the first time this year, following its conversion from a first school. I also evaluated the school's safeguarding procedures.
- Children get off to a good start in the early years. Adults provide a rich variety of exciting activities that interest children, whether they are playing inside or outside. Children enjoy playing with their friends and are encouraged to apply care and concentration to their learning. This helps them to develop good attitudes to learning. Children make good progress in all areas of learning because provision meets their needs extremely well.
- Pupils develop an excellent understanding of phonics. Teachers and teaching assistants are highly skilled and pupils are taught well. In key stage 1, in 2016, the percentage of pupils who had passed the phonics check was above average.

This figure includes pupils who attend the Communication Centre, many of whom made excellent progress in this key area of learning from low starting points.

- Pupils continue to make good progress in reading, writing and mathematics in key stage 1. Teaching is effective and pupils have good attitudes to learning. Pupils are well prepared for the next stage of their education when they move into key stage 2. This includes those pupils who move from the Communication Centre back to their previous school at the end of Year 2.
- Pupils across key stage 2, including those in the new Year 6 class, are making good progress in reading and writing. They make good progress in developing their reading skills and are well supported. Many of the pupils spoken to during this inspection are enthusiastic readers and read regularly for pleasure. Pupils also make good progress in developing their writing skills. They are given regular opportunities to write at length, and for different purposes, in English lessons. The quality of written work is celebrated in displays across the school, in classrooms and in corridors.
- A good level of challenge is provided in mathematics lessons in key stage 2, and pupils make good progress as a result. The work seen in pupils' books shows that they are often given the opportunity to use and apply their mathematical skills and knowledge to investigate and solve problems. Pupils are making good progress in mathematics.
- The generally good quality of work seen in pupils' books is often not matched by good presentation or neat handwriting. Too often, teachers accept work which is not presented neatly without comment. As a result, pupils do not show enough pride in their work and do not try hard enough to develop their handwriting skills.
- The school has a well-planned curriculum, with children benefiting from regular opportunities to study subjects such as music, science and art. However, there is inconsistency in the quality of work seen in different year groups. Not enough is being done to check on the quality of work across the curriculum or to improve the quality of teaching and learning in subjects other than English and mathematics.
- School leaders have taken firm and effective action to improve attendance, which had been below the national average in both 2015 and 2016. Attendance is currently above last year's national average and the percentage of pupils who are persistently absent from school has fallen significantly.

Next steps for the school

In order to ensure that the school continues to improve, school leaders and those responsible for governance should:

- develop the role of leaders in checking and improving the quality of work in subjects other than mathematics and English
- raise expectations and improve the quality of pupils' handwriting and presentation.

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

Yours sincerely

Paul Tomkow
Her Majesty's Inspector

Information about the inspection

During the inspection, I held meetings with the headteacher and the deputy headteacher. I also met with five governors, including the chair and vice-chair of the governing body, a representative of the local authority and pupils from Year 6. I met with the teacher in charge of the Communication Centre and a speech therapist. I scrutinised a range of documents, policies and assessment information. I made short visits to classrooms to observe teaching and learning and looked at the work in pupils' books. I listened to pupils from Year 3 and Year 5 reading and spoke to four pupils from Year 6.