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Mrs C Lewis
Headteacher
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Dear Mrs Lewis

Short inspection of Hollyfield Primary School

Following my visit to the school on 28 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 judged to be good in May 2013.

This school continues to be good.

The leadership team has maintained the good quality of education in the school since the last inspection.

You and governors have built an impressive leadership team at Hollyfield. You are all passionate about what you do and want the very best for the children. Outcomes have continued to improve at every phase. Pupils make strong rates of progress from their different starting points and are enthusiastic learners. I spoke to pupils across the school during the inspection and they all reported that they enjoy learning and feel safe at their school.

You focus on developing the whole child. You have developed the curriculum to ensure that pupils learn how to excel academically and develop personally. The vast majority of parents that I spoke to, and those that responded to the Ofsted questionnaire, are very satisfied with the standard of education at the school. The governing body display considerable passion and drive. Like you, governors have high expectations, and are committed to securing further improvements.

During the inspection I observed pupils immersed in learning across the curriculum. In one particular year group, pupils were exploring dynamics in a music lesson. Pupils were engrossed. They moved their arms up and down to mimic the subtle and dramatic changes within Gustav Holst's 'Mars' from 'The Planets' suite. The teacher's enthusiasm and strong subject knowledge encouraged pupils to express themselves freely and understand a range of technical terminology.

At the last inspection, you were asked to further increase the amount of outstanding teaching and speed up rates of progress in mathematics. You and leaders have developed the quality of teaching over a period of time. You have invested in specific training programmes to support teachers' practice. Above all, you have introduced a 'coaching programme', where teachers are given valuable opportunities to learn from one another and refine their skills. These improvement strategies have been highly successful. By the time pupils leave in Year 6, they secure rates of progress that are at least in line with, or above, those found nationally in most subjects. Staff have refined their practice and teach mathematics with confidence.

During the inspection, I observed teachers carefully developing the skills of pupils. As a result of effective teaching, pupils are able to successfully tackle a range of mathematical problems. Teachers are not afraid to take risks and are focused on challenging their classes. If pupils find a problem particularly challenging, or if they make an error, teachers will proudly announce to the class that they have found a 'juicy mistake'. Difficult calculations and 'juicy mistakes' are analysed by the whole class to help pupils fully understand mathematical concepts. This process helps pupils have a secure understanding of different aspects of mathematics before they move onto something new.

Leaders and governors have also been quick to address any emerging weaknesses in the school. In 2016, rates of progress in reading at the end of key stage 2 were lower than national outcomes for some groups of learners. You analysed assessment information and established a plan to develop specific aspects of the teaching of reading. This has included developing pupils' inference skills. Since September of last year, you have provided staff with additional training and have enhanced reading areas across the school. Pupils that I heard read were able to describe some of the strategies you have introduced. Pupils also talk with enthusiasm about the books that they share at school and at home. Your work is having a positive impact and must now be built upon further.

Safeguarding is effective.

The leadership team are very aware of their duties in relation to safeguarding. Records are detailed and include the actions the school takes, in conjunction with other agencies, to keep pupils safe.

The curriculum has been enhanced to help pupils learn about safety. The school employs the services of a range of additional agencies to teach pupils about safety and support rates of attendance. In 2016, rates of attendance for some pupils who have special educational needs and/or disabilities were below national levels. Leaders and staff monitor attendance carefully, track any persistent absence, and have devised a range of incentives to encourage good attendance. As a result of the school's work, the attendance of this group of pupils has improved considerably and is no longer a cause for concern.

Inspection findings

At the start of the inspection, I met with you and your leaders to discuss the school's strengths and areas for development. As a result of our discussions we devised several key lines of enquiry to assure ourselves that a good standard of education is being maintained. The findings from these key lines of enquiry and resulting inspection activity are outlined below. Findings begin with your work to ensure that safeguarding is effective.

- As outlined above, your policies and procedures have been developed in line with statutory guidance and are fit for purpose. You ensure that staff are appropriately trained and pay particular attention to supporting any vulnerable pupils. This includes your work to support looked after children. Your records and plans demonstrate that you understand pupils' needs well. You regularly review pupils' progress and are committed to ensuring that children looked after achieve.
- You and leaders have devised detailed plans to respond to any variations in achievement. Your improvement plans establish ambitious targets for pupils' attainment and cite the training that teachers will receive to develop their practice. However, the weaknesses of some aspects of your provision have not been precisely identified. For example, the early years has strengths, but you do not yet feel that it is outstanding. You therefore need to clearly identify what it is that you feel requires further development and monitor this carefully through your improvement work. You do have an action plan for developing this phase further, but the actions to be taken and how these will be measured are not sufficiently detailed. As a result, governors are not able to fully monitor the impact of leaders' work.
- Pupil premium funding is used effectively to provide pupils with additional teaching and programmes of support. Some of this support is given to pupils before they start a new topic of learning. This helps pupils feel prepared and ready for new challenges. Pupils' books demonstrate that they make strong rates of progress across the curriculum. There are no significant gaps between the achievement of disadvantaged pupils and other pupils nationally or those within school.
- Teachers' planning has developed considerably to ensure that pupils are provided with sufficient levels of challenge. Since January of this year, teachers have adapted their practice further. Work in books shows that teachers are reshaping tasks during lessons, so that pupils are able to move on to harder work if they are demonstrating a secure understanding of a concept. This strategy is accelerating rates of progress, particularly for the most able pupils.
- Teachers have received training and support to enhance their questioning skills. As a result, teachers' practice has developed and pupils are routinely encouraged to deepen their thinking and explain their answers fully. However, there is some variation in the quality of questioning across different year groups and you acknowledge that there is scope to develop teachers' skills even further.
- Pupils with special educational needs and/or disabilities are well supported at

Hollyfield. I scrutinised a range of planning documents and reviewed pupils' books to evaluate the impact of additional support. Books show strong rates of progress from pupils' different starting points. Though some pupils' targets could be reviewed at earlier points in your monitoring cycle, we found that additional support is having a positive impact on overall rates of achievement.

- Governors are very committed people who understand the school's key weaknesses well. They are proud of the school's journey of improvement and are very clear about their duties in relation to safeguarding. You and governors are rightly focused on further raising levels of attainment but also acknowledge the importance of establishing new criteria for evaluating rates of progress. You have successfully introduced new assessment systems to help track both the levels of attainment pupils reach and the progress that they make from their starting points. However, some of this work is new and requires further development. Governors and leaders should now refine systems further so that rates of progress are tracked and analysed with greater precision.
- The vast majority of parents that I spoke to are happy with Hollyfield. They are particularly pleased with the quality of teaching. A small proportion of parents raised concerns about aspects of pupils' personal development. I considered these views carefully and found no issues with pupils' behaviour, conduct or the support they receive during the inspection. Nonetheless, you and governors were receptive to the feedback, and are committed to listening to parents' compliments and/or concerns and acting upon them. Of the many compliments I received about your school during the inspection, views typical of parents included: 'Hollyfield provides a happy, safe and stimulating environment for my daughter' and 'the school has a wonderful family feel where every child is cared for and nurtured.'
- Staff that responded to the Ofsted questionnaire are unanimously happy in their roles. Teachers state that they feel motivated and respected. Staff appreciate the support of the leadership team. Staff well-being is a priority and one member of the team commented: 'I work in a positive, caring environment, where all staff are treated equally and with respect.' This sentiment was shared by several staff who took the time to include written feedback in the Ofsted survey.
- Your school has received 'light touch' support from Birmingham local authority given the strong outcomes over time. Hollyfield works very closely with six other local schools. Together the schools form a well-established cooperative called the Learning Trust for Excellence. The trust support one another by sharing best practice. Their collaborative work has resulted in a range of key improvements. You and your governors are proud to be a member of the cooperative and take responsibility for raising standards across all of the schools.

Next steps for the school

Leaders and those responsible for governance should ensure that:

- monitoring and evaluation procedures are refined further so that the development areas for all aspects of the school, including the early years, are clearly set out
- teachers' questioning skills are further developed so that pupils receive a consistently high level of challenge across the curriculum
- assessment systems evolve further so that rates of pupils' progress is analysed with greater precision.

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

Yours sincerely

Jonathan Keay
Her Majesty's Inspector

Information about the inspection

I met with you and your leaders at the start of the inspection to review your self-evaluation and school development plans. Our discussions focused on your current strengths and areas for further development. We agreed several key lines of enquiry to drive inspection activities and ascertain the extent to which your school remains good.

I conducted lesson observations in nine classes. I scrutinised work in pupils' books across the school. These inspection activities were conducted jointly with leaders. I met with parents at the school gate, reviewed the 83 responses on Parent View and 50 free text comments. I also took account of four responses to the pupil survey and 18 responses from staff.

I scrutinised a range of school documentation including the single central record, child protection files, education plans for children looked after, training records and certificates, attendance analysis, school parental questionnaires, governing body minutes, plans for pupils who have special educational needs and/or disabilities and policies.

I held a meeting with six members of the governing body including the chair of governors and vice-chair of governors. I also met with the school's adviser from the Birmingham Education Partnership (BEP).