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Mrs Clare Hewitt
Headteacher
Sixpenny Handley First School
Sixpenny Handley
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Dear Mrs Hewitt

Short inspection of Sixpenny Handley First School

Following my visit to the school on 9 November 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 your predecessor school was judged to be good in November 2014.

This school continues to be good.

As headteacher, you display a relentless drive to improve the school and ensure that all pupils and staff thrive in a safe, supportive and nurturing environment. You are well supported in this work by a committed team of staff and governors as well as by the academy trust. There is a shared understanding of the school's strengths and what needs further improvement. Your self-evaluation is accurate and based on a rigorous programme of monitoring. Through our discussions during the day, it was clear that leaders have a secure knowledge of the school. As a result, many of the areas for development that we identified during the inspection form part of your existing school improvement planning.

Children are proud to attend your school. They talk positively about the children's charter, which they helped write, and say that this results in everyone looking after each other. The school's learning qualities of wonder, connect, reflect, be self-aware, be determined and question underpin the school's work. They are promoted strongly throughout the school and are helping pupils to develop into resilient, inquisitive learners.

Parents are extremely supportive of the school and positive about the work that you are doing. Nearly all of the parents who responded to Ofsted's online survey said that they would recommend the school to another parent. Typical comments written in support of their views were: 'The staff are kind, fun and inspiring and the children are happy and well-cared for' and 'The school really does feel like a family community, where everyone is respected and accepted. Achievements are praised

and rewarded, encouraging good behaviour.'

At the time of my visit, the school's website did not meet statutory requirements for what academies must publish online. Governors recognise the need to regularly monitor the website to ensure continued compliance.

Safeguarding is effective.

The school takes its safeguarding responsibilities seriously and, as designated safeguarding lead, you have ensured that all safeguarding arrangements are fit for purpose. Procedures to ensure that only suitable people are employed to work with children are robust. Checks are thorough and records are of high quality. Systems are regularly monitored by governors so they can assure themselves that the school is meeting statutory requirements.

You have ensured that staff and governors receive high-quality training so that they are aware of the latest guidance on keeping children safe. Staff spoken with during my visit demonstrated a secure understanding of what they should do if they had any concerns. They also understood their responsibilities around reporting female genital mutilation and preventing radicalisation.

Pupils say they feel safe at school and this is a view shared by parents and staff who completed the online surveys. Pupils told me that there is little bullying at Sixpenny Handley. They have been taught to tell a trusted adult if they are worried about bullying or have any other concerns. Pupils speak fondly of their teachers and teaching assistants. The strong relationships between staff and pupils help to keep pupils safe. Pupils are knowledgeable about other risks they may face. For example, when talking about e-safety, they told me that they should not share personal details online. They also said that they would tell an adult if someone was unkind to them online or if they saw something online that made them feel uncomfortable.

The school works effectively with outside agencies and has established good relationships. Nonetheless, evidence you presented me with shows that you are prepared to escalate your concerns should the service you receive not meet your high standards.

Inspection findings

- At the start of the inspection, we agreed the main areas we would focus on. Firstly, we decided to look at the outcomes of pupils at the end of Year 4. This was because, as a first school, no published information is available for pupils leaving the school. In particular, I wanted to see how pupils in key stage 2 build upon their prior attainment at the end of Year 2 so they are well-prepared for their next stage of education.
- Assessment information provided by the school demonstrates that, from their key stage 1 starting points, pupils across Year 3 and Year 4 make progress in line with that which is typical for their age. This is supported by the work in pupils' writing, mathematics and theme books. The vast majority of pupils leave your

school having met national curriculum expectations for Year 4. A number of pupils exceed these. Pupils are well prepared for Year 5 and the transition to their next school.

- You have, however, already identified that some pupils are capable of making greater progress than they are currently. Therefore, we agreed that a next step for the school should be to ensure that greater proportions of middle-prior-attaining pupils go on to achieve greater depth by the end of Year 4.
- Our second line of enquiry was to evaluate the progress being made by children entering the early years with knowledge, skills and understanding above that which is typical for their age. Published data shows that, by the end of their Reception Year, the vast majority of children are assessed as meeting the early learning goals. However, I wanted to see how many children exceed the expected standard.
- Recorded learning, online records and assessment information demonstrate that, during their Reception Year, children make strong progress from their starting points. Early years staff have a secure understanding of what children can already do and what they need to do next in order to develop their knowledge and skills. Continuous provision is planned carefully and adults intervene purposefully to guide children's learning and provide further challenge. This is ensuring that all children, including those with higher entry points, achieve well. However, we agreed that to further strengthen the school's early years provision, greater proportions of children with typical starting points should now be challenged to exceed the early learning goals at the end of the Reception Year.
- At the start of the inspection, information on the school's website regarding its provision for pupils who have special educational needs (SEN) and/or disabilities was not in line with the latest SEND code of practice. Therefore, our next line of enquiry was to check that the school's provision meets statutory requirements.
- The school's systems for identifying pupils who have SEN and/or disabilities are accurate. In your role as SENCo, you use a range of information effectively to gain an understanding of pupils' barriers to learning. Targeted support is then put in place to address gaps in pupils' learning and you monitor regularly the impact these interventions are having on pupils' outcomes. The views of parents and learners are considered as part of the 'plan, do, review' cycle. Where appropriate, good use is made of external agencies, for example speech and language therapists and educational psychologists. School data and the work in pupils' books show that the majority of pupils who have SEN and/or disabilities are making strong progress. This is enabling them to catch up with their peers.
- Inspection activities confirm that the school is meeting statutory requirements and, during the inspection, you ensured that the information available on the website was updated.
- In line with other schools in the academy trust, you have recently introduced a revised scheme to support the teaching of mathematics. Therefore, at the start of the inspection, we agreed to an additional line of enquiry which was to evaluate the impact this is having on pupils' outcomes.
- Our joint observations of learning, discussions with pupils and examination of

workbooks demonstrated that pupils are making good progress from their starting points. Teachers have high expectations of what pupils can achieve and the majority of pupils are developing their 'mastery' of the curriculum for their year group. Pupils of all abilities are routinely provided with opportunities to apply their understanding through activities which develop their reasoning and problem-solving skills. Pupils talk confidently about their mathematics. For example, in solving word problems, pupils were able to explain why the method they had chosen was the most efficient.

- Our study of pupils' workbooks showed that pupils are developing their understanding and skills in a range of concepts. However, you recognise that some concepts are not being covered in sufficient depth. Consequently, pupils do not get opportunities to consolidate their understanding before moving on to something new.

Next steps for the school

Leaders and those responsible for governance should ensure that:

- in all phases of the school, greater proportions of middle-prior-attaining pupils are challenged to work above the standards expected for their age
- teaching provides pupils with opportunities to consolidate their understanding of mathematical concepts
- the website is monitored regularly so it meets statutory requirements for what must be published online.

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

Yours sincerely

Jonathan Dyer
Her Majesty's Inspector

Information about the inspection

During the inspection, I met with you and a member of your senior leadership team. We discussed the school's self-evaluation and considered information about pupils' progress. Together, we observed pupils in classrooms and spoke to them about their learning. I also analysed work in pupils' books from across the curriculum.

I had meetings with staff and four governors, including the chair of governors. I also met with the chief executive officer of the Heath Academy Trust. I looked at a range of written evidence, including documents relating to safeguarding and attendance. I took account of the views expressed by 36 parents who completed the online survey as well as their written comments. I also considered 14 responses

to the staff survey.