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Mr Christopher Ashley-Jones
Headteacher
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Dear Mr Ashley-Jones

Short inspection of Hitherfield Primary School

Following my visit to the school on 24 January 2018 with Julie Davey, Ofsted Inspector, 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 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 have worked well with leaders and teachers to strengthen provision and to address issues raised in the last inspection. Pupils now present work well and respond positively to the guidance and feedback they receive from teachers. These were two areas for development raised in the last inspection.

In striving for academic excellence, you have worked well to engage the support of parents and carers, and to ensure that governors are very closely involved in the school. This is reflected in the very positive feedback we received from parents. Many parents in responding to Ofsted's online survey, Parent View, spoke very positively about the community you and governors have created. They feel valued as an integral part of the school community. As one parent commented, 'This school has changed my life and I love the support offered to parents to help guide you into the role of being a parent and raising your child to be a well-rounded human being.' Your involvement of parents is a major success in strengthening the school's links between home and school and contributing to the strengthening of pupils' learning.

Leaders work well together to keep the school under review, to identify appropriate development priorities and to check the progress made. Governors play an active role through their different sub-committees and through their regular visits to the school. These are used well to ask the right questions and, as a result, governors understand what impact leaders are having on tackling issues identified for improvement. Although pupils make accelerated progress through key stage 2, we recognised together that more could be done to improve their progress through the early years and key stage 1 classes.

You have worked well with senior leaders to strengthen the curriculum and ensure that pupils have a broad and rich experience at the school. This motivates and interests pupils to want to learn and has helped create an atmosphere where pupils feel supported and can show initiative. A good focus on assessment and on improving the quality of teaching ensures that pupils receive the appropriate level of challenge and support they need to make good progress through key stage 2. Pupils become increasingly independent in their learning, and solve problems that have been set for them without relying on the teacher's support. By the time pupils move on to secondary school, the gap between disadvantaged and other pupils has narrowed significantly. Pupils are well prepared for the next stage of education.

Safeguarding is effective.

Arrangements for safeguarding are effective, and a strong culture of safeguarding is embedded across the school. You have ensured that pupil safety is the number one priority for the school. Governors work closely with you to make sure that pupils are safe and that the school provides a safe environment. All staff are well trained and kept up to date with safeguarding issues. Senior leaders keep a very close eye on vulnerable pupils. Where concerns are raised, you follow these through rigorously. Leaders are uncompromising in ensuring appropriate outside support and feedback, when they are required. This makes sure that concerns are dealt with quickly and effectively.

Pupils said that the school is a safe place and they know whom they can talk to if they have any concerns. Very good and regular reminders are provided for pupils in how to keep themselves safe when working with computers online. This is effective in ensuring that pupils are very aware of the need to be careful when using the internet. Pupils take responsibility for looking out for each other. Pupils we spoke with during the inspection said that they feel safe. They told us that they had not seen any bullying but, if they did, they were very confident that teachers would deal with it promptly.

Inspection findings

- As the first focus for the inspection, we agreed to evaluate the effectiveness of leaders' actions in ensuring that the most able pupils make good progress in reading and writing through key stage 2. While national assessments in 2017 indicated that pupils make significant gains through key stage 2, the progress of disadvantaged and middle-attaining pupils was greater than the progress of those who had attained well at the end of key stage 1.
- High-attaining pupils achieve well through key stage 2. They are motivated and well supported and show good attitudes to work. We spoke with most-able pupils and looked at their work during the inspection. They expressed very positive views about the level of challenge they receive and the opportunities teachers provide for them to solve problems and explore their own interests. They read very well and value the support of the librarian in helping them find books that they will find interesting. In science, they have many opportunities to investigate and explore their scientific thinking. Pupils are encouraged to read in depth and to look for evidence and explain what they have learned from what they have read. This encourages them to read with

meaning and understanding.

- Teachers throughout key stage 2 demonstrate good subject knowledge. They challenge pupils well, and provide support and additional questions at just the right time. This ensures that pupils have to think for themselves and try to solve their problems independently, before seeking help. Pupils present their written work neatly, and they make good progress over time. The most able pupils are working at greater depth across subjects and make good progress through the key stage.
- We also agreed to explore how effectively leaders ensure that pupils through the early years and key stage 1 make good progress and achieve well. In recent years, attainment and progress have been below average for different groups by the end of key stage 1, particularly for disadvantaged pupils.
- Assessment undertaken when children enter the Nursery Year suggests a broad range of skills, and many children are working at levels below those expected for their age. Most make good gains and, by the time they enter the Reception Year, the majority are achieving close to what would be expected for their age in reading, writing and number. Leaders set appropriately challenging targets for children to achieve through the Reception classes, and assessment is carefully monitored.
- Provision in Reception classes does not ensure, however, that children systematically build on these earlier gains. Some children lack focus in lessons, and teachers do not always have the subject knowledge they need to challenge misunderstandings. Occasionally during the inspection, children were given inaccurate information or work that was too challenging in mathematics. This limited their learning and understanding. At this point in the year, there is still much to do if children are to make good progress before they enter key stage 1.
- A good outdoor learning environment has been created for children in the early years. A good curriculum is implemented well in the Nursery to develop children's skills and their personal and social development.
- Pupils work well on the activities provided by teachers in lessons through key stage 1. They read with confidence and achieve well in the phonics screening check at the end of Year 1. Some older pupils are writing well, retelling stories and writing reports. Pupils generally work independently and behave well in lessons. However, in working independently, they do not always receive the help they need from an adult when they are uncertain or confused. Consequently, misunderstandings and mistakes are sometimes made, and teachers do not always pick these up quickly enough to intervene and help improve pupils' understanding. This slows the progress that pupils make.
- Where pupils need extra help, leaders have carefully planned support in small groups to improve pupils' phonic knowledge and to support them in their writing. This provides the individual attention that pupils need in these sessions. However, progress in learning varies for pupils through this key stage. This was reflected in the end of key stage 1 assessments, in 2017.
- Finally, we agreed to focus on how well pupils develop a breadth of knowledge and deeper understanding across all subjects to ensure that they achieve well. Detailed information is provided on the curriculum through the school's website, but termly overviews provided for each year group do not always show how the curriculum is

planned to build on pupils' prior learning.

- A comprehensive and enriching curriculum is provided for pupils across the school. Leaders have taken great care to build a curriculum that engages and motivates pupils, and enables them to make good progress. Pupils we spoke with during the inspection were enthusiastic about the range of work they do and what they have learned.
- Pupils learn French from an early age, and become confident in the subject. Through other subjects, they explore themes and ideas that build on their own cultural heritage. Leaders make good use of links with a partner school in Tanzania to strengthen pupils' understanding and appreciation of other cultures. Strong promotion of fundamental British values across the curriculum reinforces respect and tolerance for different faiths and cultures. It also strengthens pupils' understanding of democracy and respect for the law.
- In addition to gaining breadth of experience across the curriculum, pupils also study in depth so that they can achieve well in their subjects. They are encouraged to reflect on their achievements and on how they could improve their work. This encourages pupils to try harder. Rich experiences are provided in science, and there are many opportunities for the most able pupils to challenge themselves by investigating ideas and applying their knowledge in different situations. Good outdoor learning supports this, and, for example, pupils grow vegetables in the 'edible garden'. The curriculum is enriched through engagement with the Children's University and the many sporting opportunities.

Next steps for the school

Leaders and those responsible for governance should ensure that:

- provision is improved in the Reception Year to ensure that all children make good progress and achieve well
- pupils through key stage 1 receive the support and guidance they need to check their understanding, and adults intervene when pupils misunderstand or are unclear.

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

Yours sincerely

Paul Wagstaff
Her Majesty's Inspector

Information about the inspection

During the inspection, my colleague and I had discussions with the headteacher and senior staff about the school's development priorities. We met with governors about their role in supporting the school to improve. I spoke with a representative of the local

authority, and my colleague spoke with pupils and listened to them read. 'Learning walks' took place with senior leaders across classes in key stage 2, key stage 1 and the early years. Samples of pupils' work were seen in lessons and around the school. We analysed a range of school documents and looked in depth at assessment information with senior leaders. The 211 responses to Ofsted's online questionnaire, Parent View, were reviewed, as were the 33 responses to the staff questionnaire and the 41 responses to the pupil questionnaire.