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Mrs Wendy Hull  
Headteacher  
Hobletts Manor Infants' School  
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Hertfordshire  
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Dear Mrs Hull

### **Short inspection of Hobletts Manor Infants' School**

Following my visit to the school on 23 January 2018, 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 April 2014.

#### **This school continues to be good.**

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

Hobletts Manor Infants' School provides a stimulating learning environment for its pupils and their work is highly valued. One parent summed this up by saying: 'My child is thriving at Hobletts; the school is bright and vibrant with its atmosphere and displays. It is a wonderful place to visit as a parent, seeing all the children's work on the walls.' Parents and carers are overwhelmingly positive about their children's experiences at the school. They recognise that this is an inclusive school where pupils are well supported to make good progress from their starting points. One parent, speaking for many, said: 'The staff here are fantastic; they know each child as an individual and give them the tools they need to shine in their own special ways.'

You are an effective headteacher, supported well by the deputy headteacher. Together, you have successfully built up a strong team of staff. You lead with a quiet determination to drive school improvement and aim for pupils to get the best possible educational experience. Pupils enjoy coming to school, are well behaved and keen to learn.

Governors take an active part in school life and have a good understanding of their roles and responsibilities to ensure that the school meets all statutory requirements. For example, they ensure that pupil-premium funding is used effectively and check on the impact of interventions. They are supportive and provide challenge to the

leadership team. Governors have completed training to support them in being effective in their role. Their links to classes and subject leaders help them to gain an understanding of the quality of teaching and learning across the curriculum.

Since the last inspection, you have reduced absenteeism. New initiatives have highlighted the importance of good attendance to both pupils and their families. Other areas for development were explored as key lines of enquiry for this inspection.

### **Safeguarding is effective.**

You make sure that the safety and well-being of pupils is a priority for staff. You have established clear procedures for staff to report any concerns to you about children through the school's key message, 'Be observant, record and report'. Records are detailed and any issues are meticulously followed up.

Pupils I spoke to told me they felt safe. They understood the difference between falling out with a friend and bullying. They were confident that should an incident of bullying occur they could talk to an adult and they would deal with it well. Pupils look out for each other. One pupil described this by saying, 'If someone doesn't have a friend to play with, we help them to join in.' Through the school's behaviour policy, pupils are encouraged to 'speak up and speak out'.

Safer recruitment processes are robust. Appropriate checks are carried out to ensure that adults employed are suitable to work with pupils. Records are kept in a systematic way.

You have ensured that staff are regularly trained as part of an ongoing cycle and through induction of new staff. All adults know what to do, how to act and who to tell if they have concerns. They also know how to protect pupils from radicalisation and extremism. Safeguarding is a regular agenda item at staff and governing body meetings. Leaders, including governors, have ensured that safeguarding arrangements are fit for purpose.

The local authority provides appropriate support through the Hertfordshire Improvement Partner programme. The school's involvement in the Early Reading Pilot Project is supporting the development of reading skills for the youngest pupils to enable them to get off to a good start.

### **Inspection findings**

- I explored a number of key lines of enquiry during the inspection. My first key line of enquiry was to check on the quality of teaching, learning and use of assessment, as this was an area for improvement in the previous inspection report. I wanted to find out how pupils are supported and challenged to make good progress from their starting points.
- We undertook a learning walk and visited all classes, where we observed teaching and learning in both English and mathematics. Provision is particularly

effective in mathematics when teachers use visual prompts and highlight key vocabulary. We observed pupils in a mathematics lesson showing their understanding by explaining inverse operations, using prompts which they had learned.

- Adults use questioning effectively and pupils engage well in lessons. Pupils settle quickly to tasks and have positive attitudes to learning. Pupils are encouraged to think creatively. For example, in an English lesson pupils were thinking of interesting ways to catch a troll before writing their own instructions.
- Teaching assistants work well with groups of pupils and through interventions. However, sometimes they are not used as effectively in all parts of lessons.
- I found that, throughout the school, there are consistently high expectations of pupils' work. Pupils take pride in their work. Teachers use assessment between lessons to identify gaps in learning and to inform their planning. However, assessment within lessons is less effective as sometimes tasks are not adapted as the needs of learners change. On occasions, most-able pupils are not set more challenging tasks quickly enough, with the result that they do not make as much progress as they could during lessons.
- My second key line of enquiry was to evaluate how well the provision in early years promotes the development of key skills that children need to prepare them for Year 1. This is because over previous years there has been a fluctuation in the proportions of children achieving a good level of development.
- Children enjoy learning in early years. Activities are planned across all areas of learning within the early years curriculum.
- Language is promoted well by all adults. For example, in Nursery, children were following the trail of Incy Wincy Spider. The teacher modelled key vocabulary as they went forwards and backwards, up and down a ladder set out on the ground.
- Reading has a high profile in Reception classes, as children look for tricky-word treasure and are encouraged to use their knowledge of phonics when reading.
- Adults are skilled at intervening at appropriate points so that children can share their learning experiences. Adults also take these opportunities to assess and extend children's learning. The children's learning journals show that expectations of what the most able children achieve, particularly in writing, could be higher. Adults do not intervene enough when children are mark making to support them in developing their writing skills or to provide additional challenge to the most able children.
- Children particularly enjoy exploring outdoors, where they are encouraged to take risks safely, share and take turns with others. Children are well behaved as they feel safe and secure in the early years environment.
- My final key line of enquiry explored whether leaders are providing a broad curriculum which enables pupils to practise and apply their basic skills across a range of subjects. I wanted to evaluate how the school had introduced the new national curriculum. Additionally, attainment in science was lower than in other subjects.

- Teachers plan a broad and balanced curriculum through topic themes to inspire and excite pupils. Pupils in Year 1 were keen to talk about their topic, 'Turrets and Tiaras', as they were finding out about the Queen and looking forward to visiting Windsor Castle. Pupils are involved in planning through talking about what they already know and what they want to find out.
- Opportunities for outdoor learning permeate all subjects, particularly science. For example, pupils grow their own seeds and, by experimenting, discover the ideal conditions for germination. There is an extensive programme of activities, including the 'forest schools' programme, which enrich pupils' learning.
- The school is working towards achievement of the Artsmark at gold level with an action plan that is supporting all subject leaders in developing and promoting a rich and creative curriculum.
- Subject leaders are developing their roles through being coached by senior leaders. They have created their own action plans for improving teaching, learning and assessment in their subject areas. This work needs to continue so that they can fully demonstrate the impact of their actions, through their monitoring, in developing the curriculum.

### **Next steps for the school**

Leaders and those responsible for governance should ensure that:

- the leadership roles of subject leaders continue to develop so that teaching and learning flourish across all areas of the curriculum
- subject leaders use focused monitoring, in subjects other than English and mathematics, to identify where pupils make good progress and where it needs to be improved
- assessment in lessons is fully developed, so that pupils' changing needs are met, especially those of the most able.

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

Yours sincerely

Pauline Macmillan  
**Ofsted Inspector**

### **Information about the inspection**

We discussed the key lines of enquiry for this inspection, the school's internal evaluation of its performance, plans for future improvement and information about current pupils' progress and attainment. During the inspection, I held meetings with

you, members of the leadership team, four subject leaders, three governors including the chair, administrative staff and a representative from the local authority. Together we undertook joint observations of teaching and learning in all classes. I looked at a sample of pupils' current work. I spoke informally to a number of pupils in classrooms about their learning, and met with a group of pupils to talk about their school experience. I scrutinised the school's safeguarding and child protection procedures and the records of checks leaders make on suitability of staff to work with children. I considered the views of parents through 95 responses to Ofsted's online questionnaire 'Parent View', one email sent during the inspection and 44 free-text messages.