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Ms Kathryn Slatcher
Headteacher
Holymead Primary School
Hollywood Road
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Dear Ms Kathryn Slatcher

Short inspection of Holymead Primary School

Following my visit to the school on 6 March 2018 with Martin Bragg, 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 2014.

This school continues to be good.

The leadership team has maintained the good quality of education in the school since the previous inspection. Together with your capable leadership team and your skilled governing body, you have continued to build on the strengths of the school and rigorously tackled the areas that were identified as needing improvement at the time of the previous inspection.

All teachers follow the school's agreed feedback policy and this enables pupils to be clear about what they need to do to improve their work. You have developed the role of your subject leaders well and they now play a full role in checking the quality of teaching and learning across the school. A regular monitoring programme, which includes lesson observations, work scrutiny, reviewing planning and reporting to governors, ensures that senior leaders have a clear picture of the strengths and areas for development in their subject areas. It also enables class teachers to have a clear understanding of what they need to do to improve and refine their teaching skills. Your key subject leaders also support other schools within the local authority and this work enhances their leadership skills. Nevertheless, following recent staff changes to the leadership of the early years and key stage 1, you are aware that the newly appointed leader needs time and training to develop this role fully and implement the improvements that she has accurately identified.

At the time of the previous inspection, the school was asked to accelerate boys' writing in key stage 1. You and your staff team have a very secure understanding of the social and emotional problems your pupils need to overcome before they can become effective learners. The introduction of topics which are based around

stories are successfully increasing pupils' interest and engagement in Reception and in Years 1 and 2. This is helping them to improve their writing skills. The books we looked at together in Year 2 show that there is a significant improvement in boys' writing. For example, we noted that those boys who had been reluctant to write at the start of the academic year now write at length. They accurately use full stops and capital letters and some confidently insert speech and exclamation marks.

The vast majority of parents are very pleased with all aspects of school life and consider it to be a 'well run school that is focused on children attaining high standards whilst balancing this with creative, fun and engaging activities'.

Safeguarding is effective.

Leaders and governors ensure that safeguarding arrangements work well. Senior leaders and governors who participate in interviews for potential members of staff have been trained in safer recruitment processes. Safeguarding checks are robustly carried out and are completed before new staff commence their employment at the school. A governor with specialist training in safeguarding makes regular monitoring visits to ensure that all the checks are in place.

Staff members are vigilant and highly skilled. They receive regular training and updates to help them keep abreast of emerging dangers faced by children both locally and nationally. They pass on concerns quickly to leaders who rigorously follow up any safeguarding concerns with external agencies.

The school's approach to equality, diversity and respecting the rights of every individual promotes pupils' welfare very well. Pupils report that they feel safe and know that if they ever have a worry or concern there is an adult in school they can go to who will help them. The pupils I spoke to reported that any anti-social behaviour was 'extraordinarily rare'. Regular fire drills and 'lock down' practices ensure that they are confident about what to do in the unlikely event of an emergency.

Nearly all parents who responded to the online inspection questionnaire agreed that their children are kept safe at school. Their views can be summarised by one parent who explained that 'the support and pastoral care at Holymead is excellent. From the leadership team through to the class teacher, Holymead is a caring environment where children are supported to be the best they can be.'

Inspection findings

- The overall standards reached by pupils at the end of Year 6 in 2017 were above the national averages in reading, writing and mathematics. Average and most-able pupils made good progress from key stage 1. However, you are fully aware that those pupils who are supported by pupil premium funding did not make sufficient progress, particularly with their reading skills.

- After swiftly commissioning a review of the way in which pupil funding is spent,

you are using its findings to improve effectively provision for your disadvantaged pupils. This is being carefully monitored by a governor who has responsibility for ensuring the effective use of this additional funding.

- Recent changes to the way in which learning support assistants are deployed is helping disadvantaged pupils make faster progress. Previously taken out of class for extra help, disadvantaged pupils are now supported within their own class. Any specific individual or group teaching sessions are taken by their class teachers.
- The free book scheme available for all disadvantaged pupils throughout the school is helping to improve their reading skills. Access to quality children's books and a consistent approach by teachers to modelling a 'love of reading' promotes a strong engagement and interest in pupils' reading. Younger pupils enjoy retelling stories, such as 'The Three Little Pigs', in their own words or take part in acting out what happens in the book. Older pupils write detailed character studies using, for example, 'Macbeth' as a starting point. Progress in reading in key stage 2 remains strong. Nevertheless, you are fully aware that progress in reading for Reception and key stage 1 pupils needs further acceleration.
- The increased emphasis on basing topics on quality children's literature has brought a richness and depth to pupils' writing skills. Learning experiences and activities, such as visits to places of interest, theatre trips and workshops, also extend their thinking. Recently, a requirement for all pupils to write an extended piece of work at the end of every topic has raised the expectations of both pupils and teachers. This is starting to accelerate the progress that pupils make in their writing skills.
- The work of subject leaders is having a positive impact on those pupils who are disadvantaged. For example, the mathematics subject leader has introduced a daily arithmetic session for all classes, and this is promoting their basic skills effectively. This gives the pupils much more confidence to quickly apply their knowledge when solving mathematical problems. Investment in mathematical resources is also helping pupils to consolidate their learning. This is because they can visually see what they are working out.
- The science leader has built purposeful links with the mathematics curriculum to enable pupils to use skills, such as handling data and interpreting information, to support their learning. This is also extending pupils' knowledge across these two subjects and encouraging them to think deeper.
- Parents praise the school 'for the range of activities and learning opportunities that they offer in and out of the curriculum'. The pupils' success in sporting events, both locally and nationally, coupled with their strong musical abilities, are testament to the way that additional funds are used to ensure that all pupils are given a wide range of extra-curricular activities for their all-round development.

Next steps for the school

Leaders and those responsible for governance should ensure that:

- the new reading and writing initiatives introduced into the early years and key

stage 1 are fully embedded and carefully monitored to ensure that they successfully accelerate the progress that pupils make

- the newly appointed early years and key stage 1 leader develops her role fully and implements the improvements that she has accurately identified.

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

Yours sincerely

Lorna Brackstone
Her Majesty's Inspector

Information about the inspection

During the inspection, we met with you and your two deputy headteachers to discuss the school's effectiveness. I held discussions with seven governors, including the chair of the governing body. I had a short telephone call with an officer from the local authority. We visited classrooms together and looked at a sample of books with you and your deputy headteachers. We examined documents, including information about the safeguarding of children and the progress that they make in their learning. I also looked at the school's self-evaluation document and improvement plan. I considered 173 responses and free-text comments submitted to the inspection questionnaire Parent View. I also considered the responses of 42 members of staff and 24 pupils.