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Mrs Kirstie Barrett
Head of School
Harrington Hill Primary School
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Dear Mrs Barrett

Short inspection of Harrington Hill Primary School

Following my visit to the school on 20 February 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 October 2013.

This school continues to be good.

The leadership team has maintained the good quality of education in the school since the last inspection. The previous headteacher has left since then. You have been filling the post on an interim basis since September 2017 with support from an experienced local headteacher. Together, you have ensured a very clear direction for the school. Staff fully support your high expectations and the vision 'Striving for excellence. Achieving together'. Training from the local authority and support from colleagues has increased the skills of subject leaders. Governors are ambitious for the school. They question, support and challenge you and other leaders. The link with Millfields Community School has increased senior leadership capacity during the period of interim headship arrangements.

You and your team have introduced strong systems to manage change and improvement. You monitor the impact of teaching on learning rigorously, evaluate school performance and take carefully planned action where necessary. Progress is good across the school. Attainment is rising, with increasing numbers of pupils working at greater depth in each year group.

Pupils were very polite and welcoming during my visit. Those I spoke with were keen to share their thoughts and their work. Pupils try hard to adopt the school's four principles of good learning. These are expressed through characters such as 'Teamwork Tariq' and 'Independent Ivy'. During my visit, pupils were seen to concentrate well in lessons, listen carefully and respond immediately to their teachers. Pupils say that they are quite willing to try out ideas and not worry about

making mistakes. Year 5 pupils have volunteered and been trained to act as 'reading assistants' to help Year 3 pupils develop skills and gain confidence in their reading. They are proud to undertake this important role.

Incentives for pupils have helped to raise attendance to broadly average. The level of persistent absence has fallen because of the increased dialogue with families causing most concern. You inform authorities immediately if you are worried about the absence of a pupil who might be at risk, including of going missing. You are very thorough at establishing destinations when pupils leave, even if this is abroad.

Safeguarding is effective.

Safeguarding arrangements are fit for purpose. You have established a very strong culture of safeguarding. You and other leaders are fully aware of the challenges that families face. You work closely as a team and meet regularly to monitor the large number of cases causing concern. Records are meticulously maintained. You alert outside agencies very swiftly and put in place early intervention to stop concerns escalating. Your team ensures that all staff are knowledgeable about procedures through regular training, briefings and tests of their understanding. They are fully aware of the signs to look out for that might put pupils at risk, such as of potential radicalisation or female genital mutilation.

Older pupils have expressed concerns about inappropriate use of social media. You responded by having a successful training day to address their concerns, including providing advice to parents. This is backed up by regular 'safer internet' days. Pupils say that they feel safe and that there is someone they know they can turn to if they are worried. You have worked hard with pupils to identify and cope with issues such as gang violence. Assemblies and the personal, social and health education programme help pupils treat these risks in proportion and build their confidence.

Inspection findings

- At the start of the inspection, we agreed to focus on three areas. The first of these was teaching and progress in writing. This was chosen because progress in writing at key stage 2 has been stronger than in reading or mathematics. Progress in writing has been significantly above average and among the strongest in primary schools nationally. The Year 6 pupils' attainment in 2017 was above average, including at greater depth.
- The English subject leader has undertaken a rigorous review of the teaching of writing. This captured very successful features in Year 6. Pupils were given the skills and the time to reflect on their writing, review its quality and take responsibility for editing their work following teacher suggestions. This was seen to lead to strong progress. The subject leader has undertaken a training programme and worked closely with year group teams to strengthen teaching. Pupils say they are now much clearer about how they can take responsibility for improving their work.
- Progress is at least good in writing across the school and is particularly strong in Reception and Year 6. Some of the early attempts at writing by Reception

children are very impressive. Many write a series of joined sentences with plausible spelling and grammar. Teachers across the school stimulate pupils' ideas and creativity through texts, videos and pictures. Pupils apply their grammar, punctuation and spelling so their writing is interesting and accurate. For example, Year 6 pupils' books show that they have learned how to select sentence type for effect and how best to use the active or the passive voice.

- The second area of focus that we agreed for the inspection was the pupils' progress and attainment in reading across key stage 2. This was because Year 6 pupils did not appear to have built on their success in reading and in phonics at key stage 1. Progress for the 2017 Year 6 cohort was average and their attainment was below average. Fewer pupils than expected reached the high standard at the end of Year 6 given their previous Year 2 attainment. By contrast, attainment was above average at key stage 1 in 2017.
- You and your team carefully identified reasons for this slower progress. Key factors were the pupils' weak inference skills and their limited understanding of some vocabulary. You had already introduced a new reading programme, but recognised that some adaptations were needed. These have been successful. You have made sure that teachers challenge and extend the pupils' thinking more consistently. The meaning of new vocabulary is a constant focus. The success of your action is that Harrington Hill is now a 'hub' school for the programme. As such, you provide training for schools locally and nationally.
- Pupils are now making consistently stronger progress in reading so that attainment by Year 6 is rising. Very effective teaching of phonics in key stage 1 is leading to pupils making strong progress in their ability to decode unfamiliar words and bring accuracy to their writing. Teachers are building on above-average attainment at key stage 1 more securely than previously. Pupils have become confident at exploring well-chosen texts for meaning and information. They learn well from their partners through discussions in pairs and have become skilled at questioning each other.
- The third area of focus was how well the school's curriculum promotes pupils' progress across a range of subjects. We chose this because you have recently undertaken a detailed review of the curriculum and implemented some changes to topics and other subjects. The review of topics showed that subjects such as geography, history and music were not featuring consistently and in depth. You were not seeing English skills being strongly developed in other subjects.
- Not all year groups are successfully teaching different subjects using your integrated topic approach. You are not yet able to demonstrate that skills in history and geography, for example, are taught in depth and with progression. You and your team have now redesigned topics for trial during the summer term. This is so that lessons learned can then be used to adapt teaching for a full roll-out in the autumn term. Pupils are starting to use their writing to support learning in topics, although this is very much work in progress. This can be seen through some trialled work on 'Oceans' in Year 4.
- The review of mathematics teaching has resulted in pupils becoming secure problem-solvers. Activities to develop reasoning and deepen understanding of new concepts are integral to every session. Science teaching is based on

developing enquiry skills. Pupils learn to plan and carry out investigations, record data gathered and use this to draw conclusions. Art skills develop progressively as pupils move through the school. Teaching is linked to other subjects such as looking at art in mathematics. The new music teaching programme develops skills in depth and learning is enriched through choirs and a 'rock band'.

- You also identified that not all year groups have the same opportunities to conduct visits and trips related to their learning. Your plans are to build these into each topic to realise your aim of broadening the pupils' experiences and expanding their horizons. You wisely intend to retain themed events such as 'diversity week' because they celebrate the community and promote British values highly effectively. This is also achieved through assemblies and the personal, social and health education programme.

Next steps for the school

Leaders and those responsible for governance should ensure that:

- new topic programmes are embedded fully so that subjects are taught in depth and meet the school's stated aim that English skills should be a feature of learning in each topic.

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

Yours sincerely

Martin Beale
Ofsted Inspector

Information about the inspection

I carried out the following activities during the inspection:

- I met you, the executive headteacher and your senior team. I met two governors, including the chair of governors, and a representative of the local authority.
- Your acting deputy headteacher accompanied me when I visited parts of lessons. I also observed pupils as they moved around the school.
- I met with a group of pupils to discuss their experiences of school.
- As there were only 14 responses to Parent View, Ofsted's online questionnaire, I also considered a survey of parents undertaken by the school in November 2017. I also took account of the 22 responses to the staff questionnaire.
- I evaluated safeguarding procedures, including policies to keep children safe and records of training and safeguarding checks.