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Mrs Beverley Hanks
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Dear Mrs Hanks

Short inspection of New Hall Primary and Children's Centre

Following my visit to the school on 3 October 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 the school was judged to be good in September 2012.

This school continues to be good.

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

As a well-established headteacher you know with precision what the school's strengths are and what needs to be done to continue to improve it. You have demonstrated your determination to provide a high quality of education to pupils who attend New Hall Primary School and Children's Centre. You successfully led the development of the school from one form to two forms of entry between 2015 and 2016. During that period, you ensured that the standard of teaching was maintained by recruiting effective new members of staff. You also appointed new senior and middle leaders whose contribution has been crucial. Together, you have met the combined challenge of a growing number of pupils while implementing the new national curriculum. You have also benefited from the support of committed and skilled governors who share your ambition for the school.

Pupils are happy at the school. They express their enjoyment of the school with comments like, 'Lessons are fun' and 'Teachers help us.' Their attitudes are a reflection of the school's motto, 'love to learn'. The vast majority of parents appreciate the efforts that the school makes to ensure that their children are safe and happy. This is particularly true of the growing number of families who are new to the country and the area. Their children often join the school other than at normal points of transition and sometimes with little knowledge of English. The

inclusive ethos of the school is reflected in the way it caters for the needs of these children and allows them to thrive.

Pupils enjoy learning because you and your team have made the curriculum relevant. Teachers make sure that pupils have a range of memorable experiences, in and out of the classroom, that capture their imagination. Much is made of the outdoor areas, which have been extensively developed over the last few years to encourage the love of learning the school wants to foster.

You rightly identified reading as a priority for the school. Books and references to reading are highly visible around the school. You have purchased new books recently to complement learning across the curriculum. You encourage parents to write comments in their children's reading records, and teachers check these records every week.

You have successfully addressed the areas for development identified at the previous inspection. Teachers have received extensive training to ensure that lesson time is always used productively and pupils are engaged in their learning. Opportunities to share effective practice with colleagues from within the large local network of primary schools are having a positive impact on the quality of teaching and learning. You have also put in place more rigorous systems to check the quality of teaching across the school. To do so, you have developed the role of middle leaders to make them more accountable for the impact of teaching on pupils' progress. A focus on the progress of pupils in mathematics, following the previous inspection recommendations, led to improved attainment for all groups of pupils.

The successes you have had in improving the overall quality of teaching need to be sustained, and have a more significant impact not only in mathematics, but also in reading. Similarly, while children are making good progress in the early years, some aspects of the curriculum, especially understanding the world, need to be strengthened to prepare them even better for Year 1.

Safeguarding is effective.

The leadership team has ensured that all safeguarding arrangements are fit for purpose and records are detailed and of high quality. You make sure, as the main designated safeguarding lead, that all members of staff are clear about their responsibility to keep pupils safe. You also ensure that when required relevant agencies are involved to work with pupils and their families.

Leaders and staff receive regular and relevant training as well as updates when necessary. Governors take responsibility for their own safeguarding training and regularly check that arrangements to keep pupils safe are effective. The effectiveness with which leaders follow up referrals of pupils who may be at risk bears witness to the culture of safeguarding that exists in the school.

Pupils feel safe at the school because they trust adults and they know that they can talk to them if they are worried about something. The school has a strong focus on

informing pupils and their parents on online safety. You also make sure that the anti-bullying talks in assemblies or activities in class have a positive impact on the behaviour of pupils and their safety.

Inspection findings

- Attainment in phonics at the end of Year 1 declined in 2016 and the proportion of pupils who met the expected standard in phonics checks was below the national average. You analysed these results with your team and, consequently, actions were put in place by the English and early years leaders to address the situation. Improved coordination between teachers in Reception and Year 1, as well as more rigorous checks on pupil's progress to target interventions, led to a marked improvement in results in 2017. There is now a more thorough assessment of children's linguistic abilities when they start in the Reception classes. As a result, teachers can provide those who need to catch up with the support required to start in Year 1 at an appropriate level. During the inspection, there was clear evidence that the teaching of phonics was supporting the progress of children in the Reception classes. In Year 1, pupils who were asked to read unfamiliar texts aloud were clearly relying on the knowledge acquired in phonics lessons to read successfully.
- We also looked at the progress pupils make in reading and mathematics. In 2016, the proportion of pupils at key stage 1 and key stage 2 who met the expected standard in reading and mathematics was below the national average. In 2017, there was a significant improvement in progress and attainment in mathematics. There was also an improvement in progress and attainment in reading, but that was less significant than that in mathematics. You therefore decided, with your team and the governors, to make progress and attainment in reading one of the top priorities of your current school improvement plan.
- You have made sure that you shared this key priority with the whole staff. You have given phase and subject leaders additional powers and responsibilities to implement new approaches to develop reading across the school as a team. You have increased resources devoted to reading to ensure that all groups of pupils, especially disadvantaged pupils and those who have special educational needs and/or disabilities, are supported effectively. You have also provided teachers with additional access to training. As a result, as it appeared clearly during the inspection, there is a palpable interest in reading across the school. For example, there is an expectation that all pupils read at least a book a week and many read more than that. It is too early in the term to judge fully the impact on pupils' progress the new initiatives are having, but you have created the right conditions to sustain the improvement that took place during last academic year.
- Another aspect of the school's performance we considered was attendance. While the overall attendance figure for 2016 was above the national average, the attendance of some pupils fell below. The attendance of girls, disadvantaged pupils, and pupils who have special educational needs and/or disabilities was substantially below national averages.
- You are not complacent about attendance. You have been celebrating and rewarding good attendance. You have effective systems to check that absences

are legitimate. You make sure that communication with parents is effective. Last year, you put in place a new system to address persistent absences with a rigorous escalation of actions to support families whose children's attendance is problematic. You make parents aware of their duty to ensure that their children attend school. You also provide them with effective support when medical or other issues make it difficult for them fulfil this duty. The attendance of the groups previously affected by persistent absence improved in 2017 and was much closer to national averages. Current attendance figures show that improvements are being sustained.

Next steps for the school

Leaders and those responsible for governance should ensure that:

- improvements in the quality of teaching in reading are sustained and pupils are encouraged to read widely across the curriculum so that they make at least good progress in reading
- leaders develop further the early years curriculum to strengthen the attainment of children in readiness for Year 1.

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

Yours sincerely

Patrick Amieli
Ofsted Inspector

Information about the inspection

During the inspection, I held meetings with you, the deputy headteacher, the assistant headteacher, phase and subject leaders as well as the special educational needs coordinator. I also met with the chair of governors and five other governors. I spoke to pupils informally. I made short visits to six classrooms with you and looked at pupils' work. I spoke to parents at the start of the day and considered 21 responses to Ofsted's online questionnaire, Parent View. I also considered 23 responses to the staff survey.

I scrutinised various documents including the school's self-evaluation, its improvement plan, and the documents that you use to check the quality of teaching. We discussed the national test results and assessments undertaken by pupils in 2016 and 2017. I also looked at the school's published information on the website, as well as minutes of governing body meetings and information about attendance, behaviour and safety.