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19 April 2018

Mr Steve Geary
Horsted Junior School
Barberry Avenue
Chatham
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Dear Mr Geary

Short inspection of Horsted Junior School

Following my visit to the school on 27 March 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 November 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 provide exceptional leadership for this welcoming, hard-working and successful school. You set the same high expectations of staff and pupils as you do for yourself. You lead by example, working constructively with your staff team to look continuously for ways to improve the school's work.

Your positive, professional and supportive approach to school leadership ensures that staff and governors feel valued and respected. Teachers regularly review their practice and are confident about seeking advice wherever needed. They are eager to play their part in securing further improvements in the school's work. For example, they have been quick to put recent developments in mathematics teaching into practice in the classroom, securing notable improvements in the quality of pupils' learning.

The school is a reflective, upbeat and outward-looking community. For example, you and your staff liaise regularly with schools in the area, sharing news about curriculum developments and exchanging ideas about how to improve aspects of teaching.

Well-established routines and close communication with the infant school support pupils very well when they join the school at the start of Year 3. Parents are pleased with the way that their children settle into school at the start of Year 3. One parent

described the school as 'a happy place to learn', while another commented that the school 'inspires a love of learning'.

Pupils are polite, enthusiastic and keen to learn. They listen carefully to their teachers during lessons, work hard and behave well. The school's orderly and calm atmosphere contributes very well to pupils' confidence and to their well-being.

You have successfully addressed the key issues identified at the time of the previous inspection. Standards at the end of Year 6 are higher than at the time of the previous inspection and continue to rise across the school. You have improved pupils' progress in writing, including for the most able pupils, by raising teachers' expectations and strengthening teaching. As a result, pupils learn to write confidently and fluently for different purposes and audiences and achieve extremely well by the end of Year 6. Standards in writing, including the proportion of pupils writing in greater depth, were above the national average in 2017. You and your team are now keen to repeat this success by making sure that pupils make equally strong progress in reading and mathematics. For example, you have rightly identified that pupils, including some of the most able pupils, do not always develop the deeper reading and mathematics skills as fully as they should.

You and your leadership team take a sensible and proportionate approach to introducing developments in the school's work. For example, in the past few months you have made carefully considered changes to mathematics teaching, taking time to review how well developments are working before rolling them out across the school. This measured approach has ensured that you retain the considerable strengths already evident in teaching while introducing further developments.

You have established a strong team of leaders and governors. They have a clear view of the school's performance, share your high aspirations for all pupils and contribute effectively to the school's development.

Safeguarding is effective.

Strong relationships throughout the school inspire pupils' trust and parents' respect. Pupils feel comfortable talking to teachers about any worries they may have and parents say that any issues are sorted out quickly and without fuss. One parent's comment reflects the view of many when she described the school as 'a fun and safe place for children to learn'. Governors appreciate your open, honest and highly professional approach to school leadership, which ensures that any safeguarding queries are raised as early as possible and are followed up appropriately.

You and your leadership team ensure that all safeguarding arrangements are fit for purpose and rigorously maintained. Safeguarding policies and procedures are up to date and are followed consistently throughout the school. Your family liaison officer and finance assistant organise recruitment and suitability checks efficiently, making sure that they are completed promptly so that pupils can learn play and learn in a safe environment.

Inspection findings

- During this inspection, I focused on: the quality of pupils' learning in reading; how well teaching challenges and extends learning for the most able pupils in mathematics; and pupils' attendance.
- The school has a successful track record in the teaching of reading. Standards at the end of Year 6 are typically above the national average and outcomes in 2017 continued this positive trend. As a result, most pupils are well equipped with proficient reading skills which will support them in the next stage of their education. Leaders are now focusing on helping pupils of all abilities to develop a deeper and more sophisticated understanding of texts, so that more pupils can achieve the higher standards of achievement at the end of Year 6.
- In the past year, leaders have identified that some pupils are reluctant to read and consequently do not achieve as well as they should. Leaders have already taken steps to encourage reluctant readers to read and to strengthen pupils' reading skills. For example, they have increased the range of books available to appeal to a wider range of pupils' interests so that pupils are inspired to read. As a result, those pupils who were previously making slower progress are reading more frequently and making better progress.
- Leaders have increased the school's focus on ensuring that the most able pupils achieve as well as they should in mathematics. They have reviewed mathematics teaching in the school and are in the process of introducing a new approach to teaching mathematics which provides greater challenge for pupils.
- In recent months, good-quality training has strengthened the quality of mathematics teaching. Teachers have a better understanding of how to use more demanding tasks, including number problems and investigations, to extend pupils' mathematical understanding. While these developments are still at an early stage, pupils are clearly relishing the challenges posed by increasingly complex mathematics activities and enjoy the sense of achievement when reaching a solution.
- The work in pupils' books indicates that these developments in teaching are already deepening pupils' mathematical understanding, particularly for the most able. Leaders are determined to build on this good start by ensuring that pupils in all classes benefit from consistently high-quality mathematics teaching which challenges and extends learning more fully.
- The deputy headteacher and her team have secured notable improvements in attendance during the past year, particularly for disadvantaged pupils and for pupils who have special educational needs and/or disabilities. She has revised the school's attendance policy so that the school can identify any concerns at an earlier stage and has established an effective staff team which supports pupils' attendance very well. Together, they work constructively with families, agencies and local schools to ensure that pupils attend as regularly as possible.

Next steps for the school

Leaders and those responsible for governance should ensure that:

- teachers strengthen pupils' progress in reading by helping them to develop more sophisticated comprehension and inference skills
- mathematics teaching consistently challenges and extends learning, particularly for the most pupils.

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

Yours sincerely

Julie Sackett
Ofsted Inspector

Information about the inspection

During the inspection, I visited seven lessons with you and your deputy headteacher. I talked with pupils and looked at their work during my visits to the classrooms, as well as looking separately at a sample of their workbooks.

I met with you, your deputy headteacher, your assistant headteacher, your mathematics leader, your family liaison officer and your finance assistant. I also met with the chair and vice-chair of the governing body and with a representative of the local authority. I talked with pupils during the lunchtime break and spoke informally with parents at the end of the school day.

I took account of 44 responses to Ofsted's online questionnaire, Parent View, 33 responses to Ofsted's online staff questionnaire and 32 responses to Ofsted's online pupil questionnaire. I reviewed the school's website and considered a range of documents, including your summary of the school's effectiveness and the school's improvement plan. I also looked at documents relating to safeguarding and attendance.