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Mr Simon Kidwell
Headteacher
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Dear Mr Kidwell

Short inspection of Hartford Manor Primary School and Nursery

Following my visit to the school on 21 November 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 March 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 and your deputy headteacher are leading the school on a journey towards excellence. From our first meeting, I was impressed by the strong ambition that you have for pupils and staff at your school.

There have been many changes since the last inspection. A significant number of new staff have joined the school, some at a senior level. The Nursery and breakfast and after-school clubs, previously run by a private provider, have been taken over by the governing body. The school building has been extended, and the number of pupils on roll has increased. Mobility is now very high. Therefore, when considering pupils' progress, I gave more weight to the school's own information on pupils' progress and achievement than to the published data.

Any underperformance is tackled quickly and with vigour. For example, as a result of more rigorous testing, outcomes in reading, writing and mathematics at the end of key stage 1 dipped in 2016. You and your deputy headteacher did not shy away from this challenge, and wheels were immediately put in motion to address this issue. Staff received training delivered by an external consultant. In addition, two specialist mathematics teachers have been trained to raise the profile of mathematics across the school. Links were made with a school in Leeds to support your staff in raising the attainment of those who find learning more difficult as well as middle-ability pupils. Your staff now give very generously of their time to run

booster classes in mathematics before the start of the school day. Finally, the school took part in a project with other schools in the locality to improve outcomes in writing. These initiatives are bearing fruit. Provisional results for 2017 show that outcomes at the end of key stage 1 are improving. You quite rightly recognise that progress and outcomes could be even better at both key stages 1 and 2. You also acknowledge that the roles of middle leaders of subjects such as science, history and geography are not fully embedded.

You have the full backing of your staff at all levels; they hold you in the highest regard. Your staff work exceptionally well as a team and morale is high. They are proud to work at the school. They told me that you keep a close eye on the quality of their teaching; they appreciate the feedback that you give them to develop their practice further. Through your encouragement, support and approachability, many feel empowered to take on extra responsibilities, climb the ladder and achieve well in their careers. For example, teaching assistants have gained qualified teacher status. Others have taken on the responsibility of managing and developing the links that your school has established with a school in Uganda.

Most parents are equally resounding in their praise of you and your staff. They typically commented: 'This is a fantastic school, which has enabled my children to flourish.' They talked positively about how well those pupils new to the school have settled in. I believe that the following comment sums up, most eloquently, parents' views of the school: 'an excellent school which is extremely well led and managed'.

Pupils are delightful and a credit to the school and their families. As we toured the school, I observed happy, confident pupils who are keen to learn. Pupils were very keen to talk to me. They clearly contribute to decision-making in the school and relish the responsibilities you give them as members of the school council, sports ambassadors and safety councillors.

Collaborative working is a real strength of your school. As a headteacher, you have supported other schools locally that face challenging circumstances. You and your staff also work with a cluster of schools to support each other with training and the moderation of pupils' work. Teachers from a local high school regularly visit the school to teach subjects such as French and physical education (PE). Good levels of support are offered to students from local universities and colleges to help them develop their careers in education.

Governance is strong. Governors know the school well and have a good grasp of its strengths and priorities for development. They are very proud of the school and equally keen to raise achievement further for all pupils. They have a good understanding of the progress that different groups of pupils make. A watchful eye is kept on the budget to ensure that the school remains sustainable. The governing body acts as a critical friend to the school, offering good levels of support and challenge in equal measure.

At the last inspection, the school was asked to ensure that pupils' numeracy skills are promoted and developed in other subjects. Examples of pupils' work clearly show that they have opportunities to develop their mathematical skills in subjects such as science. Inspectors also asked the school to ensure that pupils who have specific learning difficulties in mathematics are identified quickly and supported so that they reach at least the level of attainment expected for their age. Case studies show that pupils who have special educational needs (SEN) and/or disabilities have their specific needs identified promptly. Timely support is then put in place to ensure that they make the best possible progress.

Safeguarding is effective.

Safeguarding arrangements across the school are fit for purpose. There is a strong culture of safeguarding in the school. Staff have a good awareness of the symptoms of abuse or neglect and procedures to follow should they be concerned about a pupil's welfare. All staff have read part 1 of 'Keeping children safe in education' and are aware that anyone can make a referral to the relevant authorities. They talk with some confidence about how to protect children from risks such as extremism, radicalisation and female genital mutilation. Staff who have responsibility for safeguarding and recruitment are trained at an appropriate level. There are comprehensive procedures in place for the recruitment and selection of staff. The single central record is compliant, and visitors' credentials are checked closely before they are admitted to the school.

Pupils told me that they feel safe in school. They know that their teachers will look after them if they have any worries. Pupils have a good understanding of the different forms of bullying. They told me that bullying sometimes occurs but staff deal with it effectively. Pupils understand how to keep themselves safe in different situations, especially when they are using the internet. Parents are of the view that 'safeguarding is of paramount importance at this school and everyone matters'.

Inspection findings

- Children start in the early years with skills and knowledge that are broadly typical for their age. From their different starting points, children make strong gains in their learning. The proportion of children achieving a good level of development is rising year on year. In 2017, 80% of children achieved a good level of development, which is above the national average. However, boys do not perform as well as girls, particularly in reading and writing. Plans are afoot to address this matter. The outdoor play area in the early years is being revamped, with a clear focus on providing boys with a more innovative range of activities to develop their reading and writing skills.
- The proportion of pupils who met the required standard in the Year 1 phonics screening check has been in line with the national average for the last two years. To accelerate pupils' progress, interventions have been put in place to identify more quickly those who are falling behind and equally those who are racing ahead. Phonics is no longer taught in isolation but is now embedded in all aspects of pupils' literacy work. For example, during our learning walk I observed

pupils across both year groups at key stage 1 using their phonic knowledge to spell out some complex words.

- As a result of swift action taken by the school, provisional results for 2017 show that outcomes at key stage 1 have improved, most notably in reading and mathematics. The proportion of pupils reaching the expected and higher standards in reading is now well above the national average. Equally, the proportion of pupils reaching the higher standards in mathematics is well above the national average. This is a notable achievement and a testament to the hard work of all the staff at your school. Outcomes for middle-ability and lower-attaining pupils in writing and mathematics, although improving, are not quite as strong.
- In 2016, the progress that pupils made in key stage 2 in reading and writing was outstanding. In addition, the progress that disadvantaged pupils made in reading was in the top 10% in the country. This is another notable achievement for your school. Issues such as high mobility and a significant number of pupils who have very complex needs mean that provisional national data for 2017 must be treated with caution. These results show that progress has slowed and overall standards have declined in some areas. The school's own assessment information tells a different story. It shows that most pupils make good progress. You quite rightly recognise that standards across all subjects could be higher, particularly for middle-attainers and lower-ability pupils.
- Careful and thoughtful consideration is given to how the pupil premium money is used. You have a good awareness of the barriers to learning that this group of pupils often face. A significant proportion of pupils who are entitled to support through this funding in 2017 have some very complex needs. Poor attendance also had a negative impact on their attainment. However, as a result of a concerted effort by the school, attendance of disadvantaged pupils has improved and persistent absenteeism has been reduced. The school's own assessment information and case studies show that progress and outcomes of disadvantaged pupils are improving. You recognise, however, that more work needs to be done to raise the attainment of this group of pupils.
- Observations of teaching, a scrutiny of pupils' work and the school's own assessment information show that all pupils currently in the school are making good progress in a range of subjects across the curriculum. However, from looking at books, we both agree that activities do not consistently challenge pupils to do their very best. In addition, at times the overuse of worksheets with small boxes prevents pupils from writing at length and in greater depth.
- Your school is delivering a broad and balanced curriculum. From my discussions with pupils and looking at work in their books, it is clear that subjects such as science, history and geography are taught in depth. The curriculum is enriched by a wonderful range of trips and visitors that ignite children's passion for learning. All pupils from Year 2 to Year 6 go on a residential trip each year. During these trips, pupils visit famous landmarks in London, learn to rock climb and abseil, build dens, cook on an open camp fire and develop mapping skills. Other trips include visits to Chester Zoo, the theatre, the Salt Museum and Jodrell Bank.

- We are in full agreement that middle leaders of subjects such as science, history and geography have not yet been given the opportunity to monitor their areas of responsibility with the same rigour as those responsible for English and mathematics. For example, you do not expect them to monitor the quality of teaching in their subjects or the progress that different groups of pupils are making as they move through the school.

Next steps for the school

Leaders and those responsible for governance should ensure that:

- attainment at the end of key stage 1 improves further, particularly in mathematics and writing for middle- and lower-ability pupils, including those who are disadvantaged
- attainment at the end of key stage 2 improves further across all subjects, but with a particular focus on middle- and lower-ability pupils, including those who are disadvantaged
- the roles of middle leaders of subjects such as history and geography are embedded so that they have a greater impact on teaching, learning and assessment.

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

Yours sincerely

Sheila Iwaskow
Her Majesty's Inspector

Information about the inspection

During the inspection, I met with you, your deputy headteacher, staff, a representative from the local authority and members of the governing body. I had discussions with pupils to seek their views of the school. We went on a tour of the school to see the learning that was taking place. I looked at some examples of pupils' work and observed the behaviour of pupils in class. I reviewed a range of documentation, including the single central record, the school's tracking system and records relating to the monitoring of teaching and learning. I also took account of the responses to Parent View, the online Ofsted questionnaire, completed by 152 parents and questionnaires completed by 44 pupils and 27 members of staff.