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Piccadilly Gate
Store Street
Manchester
M1 2WD

T 0300 123 4234
www.gov.uk/ofsted



6 March 2018

Mrs Rachel Anderson
Headteacher
Harwich Community Primary School and Nursery
Barrack Lane
Harwich
Essex
CO12 3NP

Dear Mrs Anderson

Short inspection of Harwich Community Primary School and Nursery

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 July 2014.

This school continues to be good.

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

You ensure that pupils are well taught across the school. You monitor the work of teachers and provide guidance on how they can improve. Teachers share ideas with each other. They teach together so that they can learn from one another. All staff who responded to Ofsted's survey agreed that leaders do all they can to improve teaching. Pupils respond well to the good teaching they receive. They are interested in the work they undertake, and behave well.

Teachers support the different learning needs of pupils in their classes. The work and guidance they give are usually well matched to build on what pupils already know and can do. This is particularly true in mathematics where adults carefully tailor tasks for pupils based on a clear understanding of pupils' current strengths and areas for development. Pupils' mathematical understanding and skills develop well over time and the majority of pupils make strong progress in mathematics.

Governors have a good knowledge of the strengths and weaknesses of the school. They appreciate the work that you do and value the team ethos they have developed with leaders. However, they are not afraid to challenge you to ensure that pupils are well served. Individual governors take responsibility for monitoring specific improvements. They measure the impact of leaders' actions and ensure that progress is made. Governors are proud of the work of the school and ambitious for its future. They have high expectations and a clear understanding of what next

steps the school should take.

Pupils enjoy coming to the school. Pupils I spoke with during the inspection feel it is a happy place to learn. They feel that they are usually challenged to do well and spoke positively about how it is okay to be different. Parents and carers agree. Most of those who completed Ofsted's online survey, Parent View, said they feel that their children are happy, well taught and make good progress.

Safeguarding is effective.

You have ensured that appropriate safeguarding checks are in place for all adults who come into contact with pupils in the school. All staff are appropriately trained, and you have established effective systems for them to pass on concerns about pupils. You maintain effective records of these concerns and can quickly identify if any patterns emerge which suggest pupils might be at risk. When appropriate, you seek support from external agencies and work in the interests of pupils to ensure that they get the right support.

You teach pupils how to stay safe. Through assemblies and information and communication technology (ICT) lessons, pupils learn about issues such as 'stranger danger' and staying safe online. Pupils are aware of different types of bullying. Those that I spoke with during the inspection, as well as those who completed Ofsted's survey, reported that there is little bullying and that, when it does happen, it is dealt with well. They also said that they feel safe in school. This was a view echoed by parents on Parent View.

Inspection findings

- My first line of enquiry was to establish how effectively you are improving attendance levels. For the past three years, absence levels have been higher than the national average, especially for pupils who have special educational needs (SEN) and/or disabilities.
- You are well aware of the need to improve attendance and have put in place clear systems for doing so. These are beginning to have an impact, especially on pupils who have SEN and/or disabilities. Absence rates are falling, particularly for this significant group of pupils. Your work in meeting parents when a pupil's attendance falls below 90% is effective; in most cases it has led to pupils attending school more frequently. While your strategies are working, you recognise that there is still more to do to ensure that attendance is at least average.
- My second line of enquiry related to how well you are improving the progress pupils make in reading. Since 2015, pupils' progress in reading from key stage 1 to key stage 2 has been below the national average. A smaller proportion of pupils achieved greater depth in reading in 2016 and 2017 than seen nationally, while the proportion of pupils meeting the expected standard in the phonics screening check in year 1 has been below average since 2015.

- You identified a need to improve how pupils learn to read and have sought out strategies to do this. Pupils through the early years and key stage 1 are now taught phonics effectively. They are making good progress in learning to read.
- In key stage 2, new techniques to help pupils' comprehension are improving pupils' understanding of texts. Pupils I heard read were able to do so confidently, and explain to me what they had read. They also explained how they enjoy reading and that they read a variety of texts. Pupils' work demonstrates that, over time, their reading skills are steadily improving. Pupils in Year 6 who previously struggled with reading now benefit from additional targeted support. This helps them to make rapid progress and has led to a significant improvement in the proportion of pupils in Year 6 reading at a level appropriate for their age.
- You recognise that there is still more to do to ensure that pupils are consistently reading texts which are the most appropriate for them.
- My final line of enquiry was about whether children in the early years make good progress. While improving, the proportion of children achieving a good level of development has been lower than the national average since 2015. The proportion achieving the mathematics, reading and writing early learning goals has also been low.
- Most children join the early years with knowledge and skills below those typical for their age. They are well taught in a vibrant environment, rich with numbers and words. Adults make good use of information about what children have achieved in and out of school. They guide children's development well. Because of good teaching and well targeted support, children make good progress across the areas of learning and development in the early years.

Next steps for the school

Leaders and those responsible for governance should ensure that:

- attendance rates continue to rise
- strategies to improve pupils' reading are further developed so that pupils consistently read texts which build on their current level of reading skill.

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

Yours sincerely

Andrew Hemmings
Her Majesty's Inspector

Information about the inspection

During the inspection, I spoke with school leaders and three governors. I visited all classes, accompanied by you, and reviewed pupils' work in their books.

I looked at performance information and attendance records and reviewed a range of documentation relating to the school's self-evaluation, development planning, safeguarding arrangements, and governance.

I considered the 44 responses to Ofsted's online questionnaire, Parent View, the 31 responses to the staff survey, and the 38 responses to the pupils' survey. I met with pupils to discuss their views of the school, as well as listening to pupils read.