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19 February 2019

Mrs S Wyatt
Headteacher
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Dear Mrs Wyatt

Short inspection of Horn's Mill Primary School

Following my visit to the school on 5 February 2019, 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 December 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 have high expectations of yourself, staff and pupils. Your enthusiasm for learning and high aspirations are shared by staff and governors. They are reflected in the school's motto, 'Believe, inspire and flourish.'

Parents and carers who spoke with me, and those who accessed Ofsted's online questionnaire, commented very positively about the many opportunities provided for their children. The vast majority of parents would recommend the school to others. Parents feel well informed about the progress their children make. They appreciate the guidance they receive to be able to help their children at home, particularly with phonics and multiplication skills. Parents of pupils with special educational needs and/or disabilities (SEND) appreciate the care and support that their children receive from staff. A parent who spoke with me commented, 'I can't thank staff enough for the help and support they have given, not only to my child but to the whole family.'

Pupils are polite and well mannered. They appreciate the wide range of clubs they can attend, including young voices, craft club and sports clubs, and enjoy learning to play a musical instrument. Pupils take their responsibilities seriously as members of committees, of 'Millers Task Force', which helps to look after the school grounds, and as members of the team who care for the school's chickens. They say that teachers make learning fun and interesting. They spoke enthusiastically about a recent visit to a museum, where they had the opportunity to live as Anglo-Saxons

for a day. Older pupils are looking forward to the annual residential trip and the opportunity to challenge themselves and work together. Pupils with whom I spoke said that, 'School is special because teachers recognise when you are struggling, and they help you to succeed.'

Leaders have successfully tackled the areas for improvement identified at the last inspection. Middle leaders check on the quality of teaching and provide advice and support for staff when necessary. Leaders ensure that staff have the knowledge and understanding they need to support pupils' learning effectively. The quality of teaching has improved since the last inspection. Staff appreciate opportunities to work with other colleagues and share expertise, including with colleagues in other schools, particularly in helping to implement the changes you have made to the teaching of mathematics and writing.

Safeguarding is effective.

Leaders ensure that all safeguarding arrangements are fit for purpose. Safeguarding arrangements are understood by staff. All records are detailed and securely kept. The training staff receive enables them to identify any signs of neglect or abuse. Robust systems are in place to check that all adults in school, including volunteers and other professionals, are safe to work with children. Leaders work very effectively with other agencies to ensure that pupils and families receive guidance and support when necessary.

Pupils are taught how to keep themselves safe, including when using the internet. The junior safeguarding officers check that pupils play safely at playtimes. Pupils understand the different forms bullying can take. They speak confidently that should any bullying occur then teachers deal with it quickly. They say that teachers help pupils to make the right choices about how they behave towards others.

Inspection findings

- During the inspection, we looked at several key lines of enquiry. I was interested to know what actions you had taken following the dip in outcomes for pupils at the end of key stage 2 in 2018, particularly in writing and mathematics. Leaders' evaluation of pupils' writing identified gaps in pupils' knowledge, particularly in grammar and spelling. Training for staff on the changes in how writing is taught has ensured that teaching builds progressively on pupils' prior knowledge. Leaders monitor the quality of teaching and provide support and coaching where necessary. Teachers use assessment information effectively. Pupils who are struggling have the help they need from skilled support staff. Teachers check their judgements with colleagues in other schools. Work in pupils' books is well presented and shows that pupils are now making stronger progress from their starting points. However, there are still some relative weaknesses in the accuracy of their spelling and use of grammar.
- In mathematics, you identified that pupils struggled to solve problems because of the gaps in their knowledge and understanding. Training for staff has ensured that they plan activities which allow pupils to develop mathematical concepts

effectively. Staff work together to share ideas and expertise with other colleagues. Leaders check that actions to improve the teaching of mathematics are consistently applied across the school. Pupils say they enjoy mathematics and they talk about the knowledge they need to solve challenging problems. Teachers use assessment information well to ensure that staff give pupils the help they need to catch up quickly. Staff use questions skilfully to encourage pupils to expand on their ideas and explanations when solving problems. Pupils are proud of their achievements, particularly with their knowledge of multiplication. Pupils said, 'We practise online at home and it helps with our learning in school.' However, pupils' ability to apply their mathematical knowledge to solve problems is still not as well developed as their grasp of basic mathematical facts and concepts.

- Next, we looked at how you were tackling the barriers for learning for vulnerable pupils. Barriers to learning for individual pupils have been accurately identified by leaders. You work collaboratively with other agencies to ensure that vulnerable pupils and their families receive appropriate support and guidance. You have identified that social, emotional and mental health is a key barrier for an increasing proportion of pupils who often struggle to regulate their emotions and behaviour. Pupils are supported well by highly skilled staff. Pupils spoke confidently that there is always someone they can talk with if they have any worries. They feel that the Garden Room is a safe place to be. Training for staff enables them to support pupils effectively to make the right choices about their behaviour and understand how their actions can impact on the feelings of others.
- Leaders are imaginative with some of the activities provided for pupils. For example, pupils are proud to be members of the 'Millers Task Force', which enables them to work together and develop confidence and resilience while looking after the school grounds. Caring for the school's chickens has proved to be very effective for some pupils, building confidence and self-esteem. Leaders ensure that learning is used to broaden pupils' horizons, particularly for the most vulnerable pupils, through trips, visits and residential stays. Pupils have aspirations to be teachers and scientists, and work with animals.
- I also wanted to know how pupils with SEND were supported in order for them to be able to reach the potential of which they are capable. Leaders' good subject knowledge enables them to ensure that staff have the skills and understanding they need to support pupils well. Support staff are effective in helping pupils. They use questions well to encourage pupils to refine and develop their explanations, particularly in mathematics. You work collaboratively with other professionals to access training and resources to support pupils' needs, including with colleagues in specialist provision. Leaders liaise with schools to ensure that information is shared as pupils enter and leave the school. This means that pupils settle quickly, and support remains effective. Positive relationships with families ensure that pupils receive the additional help that they need. Consequently, pupils with SEND make good progress from their starting points.
- We also looked at the actions that have been taken by leaders to ensure that children in the Reception class are ready for Year 1. Leaders work effectively with local early years settings. Children and parents enjoy the well-planned activities that leaders provide before children start school. As a result, children settle

quickly into established routines. Teachers use the assessment information they gather from a range of evidence to identify the next steps in children's learning. Teachers plan activities to capture children's interests and love of learning. The positive relationships fostered in the early years contribute to children's positive attitude to learning. Children work well together and help each other with the independent challenges teachers provide. They are happy, confident and busy. Conversations flow freely as children learn and play in an environment that supports their learning well. Evidence seen during the inspection confirms that children in early years make good progress from their starting points.

- Finally, we discussed the actions you have taken to improve the attendance of those pupils who are regularly absent from school. You know families extremely well. Staff follow up swiftly when pupils are absent from school. There is a range of rewards and incentives, which contribute to the improving attendance of the majority of pupils. Attendance is in line with the national average. However, the persistent absence of a proportion of pupils does impact negatively on the overall attendance for the school. You work with other agencies to ensure that pupils and families receive the guidance and support they need. On their return to school, pupils are given the help that they need to catch up, but extended absences from school do hinder the progress pupils make.

Next steps for the school

Leaders and those responsible for governance should ensure that they:

- continue to improve the attendance of pupils who are persistently absent from school
- embed the changes to the way mathematics is taught so pupils are able to apply their knowledge effectively and solve challenging problems
- build on the improvements in the teaching of grammar and spelling so a higher proportion of pupils reach the standard of which they are capable in their writing by the end of key stage 2.

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

Amanda Stringer
Her Majesty's Inspector

Information about the inspection

During this inspection, I met with you, other members of the leadership team and staff. I also spoke with members of the board of governors. I visited classrooms with you, where I had the opportunity to speak with pupils and look at their work. I

met with a group of pupils formally during the day, and I spoke with a number of parents at the start of the school day. I took account of the responses to the staff questionnaire and 59 responses to the pupils' questionnaire. I also considered 35 free-text comments and the 73 responses to Parent View, Ofsted's online questionnaire for parents. I scrutinised a range of documentation, including the single central record.