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Mrs Kate Nester
Headteacher
Hindhayes Infant School
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Dear Mrs Nester

Short inspection of Hindhayes Infant School

Following my visit to the school on 14 September 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 November 2011.

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 managed the significant changes that have occurred at the school since your arrival in 2014 extremely well. Changes to the school catchment area have increased pupil numbers, from 190 to 243. Weak practice has been robustly tackled, including inaccuracies in assessment judgements. Leadership potential has been developed, enabling staff to gain promotion elsewhere. As a result, substantial staff change has occurred. Through your careful and diligent leadership during this period, the quality of teaching has been maintained and, in many instances, improved.

Your school is a happy, caring and positive environment. Pupils enjoy the many opportunities that are available to them, including the Forest School and visits to the well-stocked library. The care and attention to detail you provide is evident in the high-quality case studies that demonstrate clearly the impact of school initiatives on individuals, such as developing their mental health and well-being or the promotion of good reading habits. Parents are extremely positive about the experiences their children are offered and they fully support your work. Staff are equally positive about the improvements that continue to occur at the school.

Alongside your strong commitment to developing pupils' personal qualities sits an equally determined ambition that pupils will do well academically. The changes made to leadership and governance have undoubtedly left your school in a much stronger position than several years ago. You and your team can move forward

confidently in pursuit of full consistency in the quality of teaching and pupils' outcomes. All those spoken to during the inspection understand that, above all else, you must now maintain the momentum and rigour shown in the last year to ensure that the ways of working that you have introduced have maximum impact over time.

You and your leadership team have worked tirelessly to tackle the issues from the last inspection. Significant investment in the physical environment has improved the range and quality of opportunities available for children in the early years. Children therefore learn and play together well at different times, inside and outdoors. A small number of lower-attaining pupils are not receiving support that is effective in helping them to progress well from their starting points in their writing. You are aware of this issue and have appropriate plans in place to address this issue.

In the past, published data has not compared favourably to the national performance measures. You and your leadership team have implemented the systems and processes needed to address the issues identified and raise the overall quality of teaching and learning. The clear framework of accountability ensures that these ways of working now exert maximum influence over the quality of teaching. Teachers are benefiting from the training, coaching and mentoring on offer. There is clear and tangible evidence in pupils' learning and work that leaders' actions are resulting in improved provision and outcomes. Work in pupils' books indicates that pupils' current progress is at least good; it is sometimes better than this for disadvantaged pupils.

Safeguarding is effective.

All involved in the school community are highly committed to keeping pupils safe. You have developed a culture where all staff are vigilant about the safety of pupils. Staff are perceptive in identifying when pupils could be at risk of harm from the moment they start school. Training for safeguarding and child protection is up to date, regular and welcomed, enabling staff and governors to discharge their duties fully. Staff are prompt and confident in reporting any concerns and supporting families in wider issues such as bereavement. Pupils and parents are very confident that issues are followed up.

Your strong emphasis on pupils' personal development promotes their positive behaviour, with respect and courtesy as the norm. Effective links are evident with outside agencies to cater for any vulnerable pupils. Very positive relationships across the school community mean that pupils trust staff to listen to their concerns, particularly the staff that supervise them at lunchtime. Pupils know how to use the internet and social media safely and responsibly and understand that the school is a safe and harmonious community. Governors regularly check that the school's safeguarding processes are working well and that all necessary checks are made to confirm that those who wish to work with children are suitable. Overall, the leadership team has ensured that all safeguarding arrangements are fit for purpose and of a high quality.

Inspection findings

- Your thorough analysis of the teaching and pupils' performance in phonics prompted an overhaul of the way it is delivered across the school. New approaches, combined with training for all staff, are carefully checked to see if improvements are evident. Strong whole-school systems for reading operate and there is consistent use of terminology by all adults. This was illustrated during our joint learning walk, when we had discussions with pupils, listened to them read and saw their work in books.
- When listening to some Year 1 pupils read, it was clear that pupils use their knowledge of phonics well to decode what sounds letters make. Pupils are competent in the 'basic mechanics' of reading. Pupils' enjoyment of reading and their success when segmenting more complicated sounds, then blending them to read, was clearly evident. You are also effective in ensuring that the teaching of reading develops pupils' deeper comprehension, fluency and understanding sufficiently. More pupils are therefore reaching the standards expected for their age.
- We identified that in 2014 and 2015, disadvantaged pupils had not attained as well as their non-disadvantaged peers. During our visits to lessons and when observing adults working with pupils across all age groups, it was apparent that you are addressing this attainment gap. Your planning for children's personal and early academic development involves careful consideration of their needs from the moment they enter school. Adults work tirelessly with a wide range of external agencies to ensure that pupils' needs are fully met. Activities stimulate pupils' interest and spark their imagination. As a result of your collective efforts, disadvantaged children are now reaching standards at the end of Year 2 in line with other pupils nationally.
- You have also had a marked success on improving pupils' attendance at school. This is now well above the national average. Your parent-support family worker plays a pivotal role in this element of your work. Detailed knowledge of local families and a determined approach have had a profoundly positive impact. You deserve much credit for 'getting beyond the school gate' and out into the local community, insisting that children attend school wherever possible.
- We explored how well pupils who have special educational needs and/or disabilities are progressing. Through discussions, learning walks, looking at pupils' work and talking to them it is clear that pupils of all ages enjoy school and are cared for well. Adults support pupils in their learning and personal development well. Effective specialist support is available for pupils with more-complex needs so they can achieve well.
- Currently you are balancing your work as headteacher with your role as special educational needs coordinator. You are keen to further your expertise and personal interest in this area and governors are pleased to support your ambitions. However, all leaders are aware of the need to keep the leadership of this important area under review, and amend the arrangements if necessary.
- During our time together, we examined the quality of your systems for monitoring and evaluating the school's work. Monitoring is of a very high quality

and used well to inform practice, for example in the teaching of phonics. Formal records of lessons observed are detailed, thorough and exacting. The findings are used carefully as part of the performance management process for school staff. Work scrutiny activities and pupil discussions are conducted routinely and place pupils' gains in knowledge, skill or understanding at the heart of leaders' focus. Overall, your monitoring is precise and elicits the detail needed for teachers to refine and develop their practice or target specific groups of pupils.

- Governors use the findings from leaders' monitoring effectively. Information is used alongside external evaluations of the school's performance to judge progress against key development priorities. Governors are aware that systems now require streamlining so the amount of information provided by leaders is more manageable.

Next steps for the school

Leaders and those responsible for governance should ensure that they:

- improve lower-attaining pupils' progress in gaining knowledge, skill and understanding of writing, so they can achieve well from their starting points
- maintain the effectiveness of the leadership of special educational needs and review the current arrangements if necessary
- act to improve leaders' workload by rationalising the amount of information gathered and used as a result of monitoring activities.

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

Yours sincerely

Richard Light
Her Majesty's Inspector

Information about the inspection

During the inspection, meetings were held with you and your deputy headteacher. Ten other leaders, including those for English and mathematics and early years, met with the inspector. Six members of the governing body, including the chair, met with me to discuss the actions taken since the last inspection. The school's current plans for development were evaluated, alongside recent records of the quality of teaching. Visits to most classrooms were conducted jointly with you. We evaluated the impact of teaching on pupils' learning, reviewed the quality of pupils' writing over time and talked to pupils informally about their experiences of school. A range of documentary evidence was evaluated, including those relating to safeguarding and governance. I spoke with a number of pupils from across the school and heard some read.