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Ms Joanna Lindon
Headteacher
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Dear Ms Lindon

Short inspection of Heathfield Primary School

Following my visit to the school on 24 January 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 February 2013.

This school continues to be good.

The leadership team has maintained the good quality of education in the school since the last inspection. Under your leadership the school has gone from strength to strength. You are passionate in your ambition that all children achieve their full potential, not only academically but also in becoming well-rounded, responsible and confident citizens. You, and all staff, have created a strong sense of care and nurture for the whole school community. As a result, pupils radiate a sense of fairness, compassion and equality. They talk proudly about their school logo being a rainbow, symbolising and celebrating 'differences coming together'.

Most parents who spoke to me, or responded to Parent View, Ofsted's online questionnaire, are very positive about the school and would recommend it to others. A number of parents particularly appreciate that you and your staff make 'everyone feel welcome' and say that their child 'loves school'. Comments from parents such as 'they are always there to help' are typical. It is clear from my short time with you that this is a caring, thriving school.

All staff who responded to Ofsted's online questionnaire are proud to be part of Heathfield, and say that the school is well led and they feel well supported. Your newly appointed acting deputy headteacher has grown very quickly into the role. Staff share your vision and aspirations and there is a strong sense of them working together to drive the school's continued improvement.

You have tackled the recommendations from the last inspection successfully. For

example, mathematics has a high profile in school and, as a result, outcomes at the end of key stage 1 and key stage 2 are above the national average. Teachers are effective in balancing the time they require pupils to listen in lessons, with timely opportunities for them to use and apply their mathematical skills to help them solve problems. They also use assessment information well to match work precisely to the learning needs of pupils. You were also asked to work on reducing the gap in attainment between disadvantaged and other pupils. The extra focus you have had on these pupils has been very successful and, as a result, they do well in school, often achieving comparably to, or above the national average.

Since the previous inspection, your school has experienced a high proportion of pupils that join you as international new arrivals; some of these are asylum seekers. Although some settle near to the school, a number move on to other areas of the country and, as a result, you have a very high number of pupils who move in and out of school. These pupils, most with English as an additional language, have a significant impact on the fluctuation in your outcomes and the challenges you face in achieving a high proportion of pupils at greater depth or higher standards. Nevertheless, you meet pupils' needs very well and the vast majority of pupils continue to make good progress from their starting points.

In 2016, a high proportion of children reached a good level of development at the end of the Reception Year. At the end of key stage 1, an above average proportion of pupils reached the expected standard in writing. However, in reading at the expected standard, and in reading, writing and mathematics, the percentage of pupils achieving greater depth was below pupils of a similar age nationally, but you have been quick to identify the reasons for this. You have put actions in place to ensure that pupils are on track to achieve at expected standards in reading, and at greater depth, in 2017 and in future years.

At the end of key stage 2, pupils achieved above those of a similar age at the expected standard in writing. However, you are well aware that pupils achieved less well in reading. Although the proportion of pupils achieving higher standards in reading and mathematics was above average, you are keen to increase these proportions further still. This is as well as in writing and grammar, punctuation and spelling, which were below national averages. The actions you quickly put in place are already leading to further improvement in these areas and pupils are now on track to achieve at expected and also at higher standards.

Attendance is a high priority for the school and is slowly improving, but is still below the national average. You have good-quality systems for monitoring attendance and punctuality and you use them well to make inroads into your high number of persistent absentees. You have wisely employed a part-time attendance officer in order to improve attendance further and reduce the number of pupils who are regularly absent. Her work, and the emphasis you and your staff place on the importance of attending school, is beginning to have a beneficial impact, with some notable successes. Where families are struggling, you are supportive and exercise appropriate sensitivity on an individual family basis. However, despite this work, there are still too many pupils who are persistently absent.

Safeguarding is effective.

You and your team have ensured that pupils have a safe and secure environment by promoting the clear message that safeguarding is everyone's responsibility. Safeguarding arrangements are kept rigorously and reviewed regularly to ensure that they meet statutory requirements. Safeguarding records are detailed and kept securely online. Regular and appropriate training for staff and governors is undertaken and up to date, including that related to keeping pupils safe from radicalisation and extremism, child sexual exploitation and female genital mutilation. Your vigilance around the care and support of vulnerable pupils is of a high standard. Leaders have effective relationships with other agencies and are persistent in situations where vulnerable pupils need extra support or advocacy.

Pupils say they feel very safe and well cared for in school and gave the inspector many examples of how the teachers do this. They are confident that adults will help them if needed. Pupils explained the difference between bullying and 'falling out'. They said that such incidents happen, but very rarely. Adults deal with any situations quickly. Pupils of all ages talk with knowledge about the ways they can stay safe in a range of situations, including personally and online. The very large majority of parents feel that you and the staff keep their children safe and well looked after.

Inspection findings

- You know your school well and, from the outset of the inspection, demonstrated an honest and accurate evaluation of the strengths of the school and areas in need of further work. These capture your high expectations and consistency of approach, and are used effectively to ensure that everyone in school is clear about the direction they are heading. Governors are supportive and challenge effectively where needed.
- Your middle leadership team are keen to make an important contribution to driving further improvements. They talk with enthusiasm and knowledge about their areas of responsibility. Your collaborative approach to school development is a strength. Staff, including teachers, support staff and governors, talk very positively about their central involvement with the developments in school. As one member of staff said, 'We all have a part to play in making the school a success.' You and your leadership team have a very good capacity for improving the school further.
- The information you gather about pupils' progress is of a high quality. You have a very clear and successful system that is used effectively by leaders, teachers and governors. This information clearly identifies which pupils or groups are making progress and which need some additional support or challenge. You have refined your information gathering to capture the progress journey of cohort groups of pupils, such as international new arrivals and the most able. This has been particularly effective in tracking the journey of your present Year 3 cohort group who have a diverse range of learning needs. The increased focus has ensured that as many of these pupils as possible will achieve at expected and higher

standards by the end of key stage 2.

- You have correctly identified the need to improve the achievement of pupils in reading across the school and also to further increase the proportion of pupils achieving greater depth or higher standards in reading, writing and mathematics. To this end, you have taken decisive action, including refining your reading curriculum, to help pupils catch up quickly if they join the school with limited reading skills or, equally, to extend and challenge learners further. For example, you have greatly increased the opportunities to use reading and comprehension across the curriculum, including in topic work and through challenge questions.
- All Year 1 pupils that were able to meet the expected standard in the national phonics screening check did so. Those that did not were at a very early stage of speaking English. You have put things in place to help these pupils catch up rapidly. For example, you have introduced additional intervention sessions for learners who might need support learning phonics in key stage 2. These actions are already having a positive impact and evidence suggests that pupils are on track to make good and better progress.
- The provision for pupils who have special educational needs and/or disabilities is effective. Resources, including for mathematics, are of a high standard and tailored to the specific needs of pupils to ensure that they can access learning. Staff have a good understanding of these pupils' learning and welfare needs and every effort is made to remove any social or physical barriers. This ensures that these pupils succeed in their learning and their personal and social development. As a result, pupils who have special educational needs and/or disabilities make good progress
- Behaviour around school and in the playground is positive. This is the result of a range of strategies you have put in place to deal with incidents of inappropriate behaviour in the past that led to exclusions. Pupils are unanimous in saying that behaviour incidents are rare and they are adamant that any situations that do occur are dealt with quickly by adults. Pupils are very clear about the school rules and say there are lots of opportunities to be rewarded for good behaviour. They talk very positively about the range of play equipment available.
- There are a number of strengths within the school. Pupils have very good attitudes to learning. Pupils describe their classrooms as places of 'peace and quiet to learn' and are eager and enthusiastic to 'learn new things'.
- Personal development is central to the work of the school and pupils are excellent ambassadors for care and consideration to others. They are keen to say they are welcoming and how 'everyone is unique, and is our friend'. The emphasis the school places on developing 'can-do' skills, such as 'resilience' and 'risk-taking', are invaluable in supporting all pupils, but particularly those with vulnerabilities, so that they can build confident, affirming life skills.
- A particular strength is the 'nurture' provision that the school makes available for its vulnerable pupils. It caters for a broad range of needs and works closely with the individual family and pupil. It builds relationships that form the foundation for pupils feeling secure and confident enough to access learning, friendships with peers and all that the school has to offer.

- Early years provision is a strength. Children start the early years with skills and knowledge that are below those of a similar age, and some well below. There is very good quality provision and teaching offered to 2- and 3-year-old children, through to Nursery and Reception. As a result, children make at least good progress and are well equipped to start in Year 1. There is a strong emphasis on number, phonics, mark-making and sharing books in all areas of provision. There is a wide range of stimulating, excellent quality learning experiences available to children, both inside and outside, and children visibly enjoy engaging in them. As a result, children are happy and keen to learn.

Next steps for the school

Leaders and those responsible for governance should ensure that:

- teachers immerse pupils in opportunities to read and enjoy books, to ensure that reading achievement continues to improve across the school
- they continue to keep a close eye on raising the achievement of the most able, so that these pupils make the gains of which they are capable
- the attendance of pupils rises still further, and in particular that the number of pupils persistently missing school reduces.

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

Yours sincerely

Sue Eastwood
Her Majesty's Inspector

Information about the inspection

During this inspection, I met with you, your acting deputy headteacher and other members of your leadership team. I also met with the person responsible for maintaining safeguarding records and your attendance officer. I met with two governors and I spoke to the chair of the governing body and a representative of Bolton local authority on the telephone. We visited lessons and I scrutinised pupils' work. I took account of the nine responses from parents to Ofsted's online questionnaire, Parent View, as well as the views of six parents spoken to before the school day. I took account of the 17 responses to Ofsted's staff questionnaire and spoke to staff during the day. I also took account of 30 responses from pupils to Ofsted's pupil questionnaire and met with a group of pupils. I observed pupils' behaviour in lessons and around school. I looked at a number of documents, including information about pupils' achievement; your school self-evaluation; the school improvement plan; behaviour and incident logs; and documents relating to safeguarding.