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Elizabeth Stockley
Headteacher
Little Hadham Primary School
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Dear Mrs Stockley

Short inspection of Little Hadham Primary School

Following my visit to the school on 13 March 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 June 2014.

This school continues to be good.

The leadership team has maintained the good quality of education in the school since the previous inspection. The many parents and carers who expressed their views through the Ofsted online questionnaire, Parent View, are very positive about the school. All would recommend Little Hadham Primary School to other families. A further 47 parents sent additional comments. Almost all praise your leadership and its impact on the quality of provision, the progress that their children are making and the care that they receive. Parents say that you are totally dedicated to making the school the best it can be. Many are amazed at the large number of extra-curricular activities available to their children considering the small size of the school. This is thanks to the dedication of all staff.

Comments from parents include:

- the school nurtures a love for learning
- despite its smaller size, the school always puts on a full and varied programme
- the leadership is clear and decisive; communication from the school is exceptional
- the early years unit is a fantastic environment: welcoming, friendly, safe
- the teachers care deeply about the work they are doing.

The findings from this inspection support these positive views. A very small number of parents are worried about the change of headteacher as you are retiring in July 2018. The experienced deputy headteacher is highly capable. She is aware of the school's key priorities and is providing the stability and continuity that the school needs. This

inspection found that governors are well organised. They are doing everything they can to ensure seamless transition to new leadership. Governors are keeping parents well informed.

The pupils I met love their school. Pupils said that staff listen to them and take pupils' views into account. They feel that their teachers are helping them a lot. The Year 6 pupils are confident. They said that they are well prepared to move to a larger secondary school. Pupils clearly explained to me that 'if behaviour is not good, and this is rare, staff deal with the issues quickly'. Pupils said that teachers make the lessons interesting. They particularly enjoy the exciting science experiments, the learning of French as it is 'different' and the many clubs and educational visits. Children get off to a flying start in the early years unit. The visit to Colchester Zoo, which took place on the day of this inspection, was well organised. The children were very excited to tell me how they would get to the zoo and what they were expecting to see there. The children's work that I looked at and staff's assessment of children's progress provide a clear picture of the wide range of experiences that children undertake and learn from.

Pupils explained how they are challenged in their work. They understand the school's 'root-stem-flower-pollen' strategy that encourages them to select work pitched at different levels. Where teaching is effective this works well. However, in some subjects, work does not build well on pupils' potential and some activities are not sufficiently demanding. At the previous inspection, the inspector recommended that pupils be given more opportunities to write across the curriculum and to improve spelling, punctuation and grammar. Staff now encourage pupils, particularly boys, to write in a range of different styles and genres. However, you acknowledge that further work is required and improving writing remains a key priority of the school's development plan. Staff are applying the school's assessment policy diligently.

With the support of senior leaders and governors you evaluate the school's strengths and areas for further improvement well. During our joint observations, you explained how you are improving the quality of teaching and learning to make it even better. Many staff completed a questionnaire as part of this inspection and all are proud to work at the school. Subject leaders make the most of local networks to share good practice and learn from others.

Safeguarding is effective.

As the designated safeguarding lead you ensure that all safeguarding arrangements are fit for purpose. The single central record is kept up to date and all necessary checks are made when appointing staff. The school's office manager is well organised and meticulous.

Pupils are taught how to keep safe. They clearly explained how to manage risks, such as when using the internet and social networking sites. You record and follow up any concerns that you may have about individual pupils. You liaise effectively with families and external agencies to ensure that pupils get the help that they need.

Inspection findings

- I chose to follow up several key lines of enquiry to ascertain that the school remained at least good. We jointly looked at pupils' progress in writing. We also checked the quality of provision in the early years and the achievement of pupils who are in receipt of additional funding.
- You have introduced several initiatives to improve pupils' outcomes in writing. This is because you recognised that, in the recent past, pupils' rate of progress has not been rapid enough. In 2017, pupils' progress in writing at key stages 1 and 2 was below average. Too few pupils achieved the highest standards.
- The strategies, such as ERIC (explain-retrieve-interpret-choice), are beginning to pay off and current pupils are doing much better. Boys, in particular, are now more aware of the importance of writing. Teachers are carefully selecting topics to stimulate their interest, including in the early years. The 'Big Write' and 'Wow' books I looked at contained some examples of high-quality work. One of your successes includes the effective contribution of parents to their children's writing activities.
- Despite these improvements, accelerating progress in writing remains a key priority. In some subjects, handwriting is not as good as it could be. When I reviewed the effectiveness of teaching and learning, I found that staff's expectations are not yet consistently high. This leads to the most able pupils not producing work of sufficient depth.
- Parents are positive about the provision and care in the early years unit. The area is welcoming, safe and well resourced, indoors and outdoors. Children enter the unit with a range of pre-school experiences. In 2017, the proportion of children achieving good levels of development (61%) was below average. A challenging target of 80% has been set for this year and the early years leader, who is also a member of the senior leadership team, is tackling the areas that require some consolidation. Renewed impetus is rightly placed on developing children's literacy and communication skills. Parents commented positively on the 'busy fingers' initiative that develops children's fine motor skills.
- The number of pupils who receive additional funding to support their welfare and learning is small. Pupils are well supported so that they can access all class activities and are given equal chance to succeed. The teaching assistants provide effective support in class and they know these pupils well. You are aware of the need to check whether the use of additional funding is making a difference so that pupils who are disadvantaged achieve as well as others in the school and nationally.

Next steps for the school

Leaders and those responsible for governance should ensure that:

- the quality of pupils' writing, including their handwriting, is high across subjects, not just in English
- the most able pupils achieve consistently well across areas of the curriculum.

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

Yours sincerely

Marianick Ellender-Gelé
Her Majesty's Inspector

Information about the inspection

I held meetings with you, the deputy headteacher, the early years and subject leaders, governors and pupils. We jointly observed pupils' learning in a series of short visits to classes. I looked at pupils' work across subjects. I had a telephone discussion with the school's improvement partner and, at the end of the day, I met some parents. I scrutinised the school documentation, including policies, the school's self-evaluation, the school's development plan, safeguarding records and information about pupils' achievement and behaviour. I considered the views expressed in 69 responses to Ofsted's online survey, Parent View, together with 47 additional comments from parents and 14 questionnaires returned by school staff. I also looked at the school's own parent surveys.