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David Jones  
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Dear Mr Jones

### **Short inspection of Halwill Community Primary School**

Following my visit to the school on 19 January 2016, 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 2010.

#### **This school continues to be good.**

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

Your high expectations of the school and clear vision for its role in the continuous improvement of the Carey Federation of small schools are shared with, and valued by, governors, staff, pupils and parents. Parents appreciate the way you involve them in their children's education. A parent wrote, 'I feel that parents and teachers work alongside each other for the benefit of the children'.

Staff morale is high and teachers are eager to develop further their expertise. Through effective performance management and staff training, you continue to improve the quality of teaching, which is good overall. You are rightly ambitious to raise the quality of teaching even further and thereby raise pupils' achievement. There are already examples of exemplary practice in the school to support you in realising this ambition.

Since the previous inspection, the trend in attainment and progress in English and mathematics has risen and continues to improve, including in Years 1 and 2, which was an area for improvement in the previous inspection. Pupils from Reception class through to Year 6 make good progress, particularly in reading and mathematics. You

have identified the need to improve their achievement in writing, especially in grammar, punctuation and spelling. You and the staff have started to work on this. Through robust assessment procedures and challenging targets, you ensure that no pupil is left behind. This is an improvement since the previous inspection. Parents' comments on Ofsted's Parent View online survey indicate that they are pleased with the progress their children are making.

Pupils enjoy school. They are keen to learn and to help each other. They attend regularly and behave well. Pupils say that they feel very safe in school. They learn how to keep safe, including from cyber-bullying. No concerns about behaviour and safety were raised by parents, pupils or staff. Through a broad and interesting curriculum, the school provides a wide range of opportunities for pupils' personal development and their good spiritual, moral, social and cultural development.

In order to sustain the improvements in the school, you are developing successfully the monitoring and evaluation skills of the heads of teaching and learning and the subject leaders, although these leaders are not yet trained in lesson observation. Through rigorous self-evaluation, you identify the most relevant priorities for school improvement and hold teachers to account for the progress pupils make, to good effect.

The governors have a secure understanding of the school's strengths and areas for improvement through monitoring progress on the priorities identified in the school development and improvement plan. They hold senior and middle leaders to account robustly for pupils' achievement. The impact of the governors' challenge is evident in the higher standards for disadvantaged pupils, disabled pupils, those who have special educational needs and the most able.

### **Safeguarding is effective.**

You, other leaders and administrative staff have ensured that procedures meet requirements for safer recruitment. All required checks on the suitability of staff to work with children are carried out and recorded well. All staff are trained in safeguarding at appropriate levels and have a good understanding of the school's policy and procedures. Procedures for identifying pupils who may be at risk of harm are carried out, recorded and followed up appropriately.

### **Inspection findings**

- You have developed a robust system for monitoring the progress of all pupils. This, together with your rigorous and accurate evaluation of the school's strengths and areas for improvement, ensure that any underperformance is identified early and addressed by appropriate intervention. As a result, disadvantaged pupils and those who are the most able achieve at least as well as other pupils in the school and often better than pupils nationally.

- Children in the Early Years Foundation Stage get off to a good start due to effective teaching and learning. The proportion achieving a good level of development is slightly above the national average.
- Achievement in the Year 1 test in phonics (the sounds that letters make) is broadly average. Across the school, pupils make particularly good progress in reading so that by the end of Key Stage 2, their achievement in this subject is above average.
- Pupils make good progress in mathematics. They make expected progress in writing and you have identified the need to raise achievement in this subject. You and the staff have started to develop pupils' skills in punctuation, grammar and spelling throughout the school. In some classes, teachers do not give pupils enough opportunities to apply their new skills across the curriculum.
- Teachers' use of assessment is improving. All teachers use the school's assessment system to structure lessons so that they lead the pupils, who are mostly in mixed-age classes, from their various starting points to greater understanding. A key feature of the examples of outstanding teaching in the school is the constant focus on checking and extending pupils' progress. In these lessons, teachers ask probing questions which help pupils to think about their work more deeply. This dialogue continues in written responses from the teacher and pupil in the work books. It leads to rapid progress and pupils taking responsibility for improving their own and each other's work.
- You provide effective training for support staff. Your teaching assistants and learning support assistants skilfully question pupils to encourage them to think for themselves and develop a better understanding of their work.
- Owing to the effective teaching and an interesting curriculum, pupils are very keen to learn. Pupils talk enthusiastically about their many visits and visitors. They explained, for example, how visitors from a local museum helped them, through role play, to understand what life was like during the Second World War, and how a storyteller showed them how to write more imaginatively.
- Opportunities to present their work to others, such as in a rap about the digestive system, support their growing confidence. A good number of pupils participate in the wide range of extra-curricular activities on offer, including sport and a science society, and many play a musical instrument. A recent addition to the curriculum is swimming lessons for the whole school. Such activities extend pupils' social, cultural and health development.
- Pupils behave well and enjoy earning house points for rewards. Their attendance is above average.
- Pupils feel very safe in school. They learn how to keep themselves safe, such as when using the internet or from different kinds of bullying. In forming class rules, voting for members of the school council and learning to accept different faiths and views, they are prepared well for life in modern Britain and develop their spiritual and moral understanding.

- Senior and middle leaders are skilled in accurately analysing information about pupils' progress and linking this to the work in their books. This is an improvement since the previous inspection. Leaders currently have limited training in conducting observations of the quality of teaching and learning in lessons. However, you are determined to use the greater flexibility in managing resources that comes through the federation of schools to enable this to happen. To this end, you and the governors have recently appointed a special educational needs coordinator to support teachers and pupils across the schools.
- The achievement of disabled pupils and those with special educational needs is currently in line with other pupils in the school. The mathematics leader, in her role as a specialist leader of education, also works across the schools. The increased sharing of leadership responsibility is extending the capacity of the school to improve further.
- The governors are knowledgeable about the school's performance. They examine information about pupils' progress for each year group. At their regular meetings, they hold senior and subject leaders to account for improvements and visit the school to see the work for themselves. They ask relevant questions to challenge leaders to improve school performance, and the impact of this challenge is evident in pupils' higher standards. The governors ensure statutory requirements, including for safeguarding, are met and that their own training and training for the staff are up to date.
- The local authority maintains an overview of the school's performance. As it correctly assesses the school's performance as good, it has provided only light-touch support. The school has planned local authority training to develop pupils' skills in grammar, punctuation and spelling. As the chair of the local learning community of schools, you provide effective support for other schools, for example in developing procedures for assessing pupils' progress.

## **Next steps for the school**

Leaders and governors should ensure that:

- pupils' progress in writing, especially in grammar, punctuation and spelling, improves in line with their progress in reading and mathematics, by:
  - ensuring that these aspects being taught effectively throughout the school
  - providing more opportunities for pupils, including those in the early years, to apply these skills across a wide range of subjects
- the drive to further improve the quality of teaching and learning is maintained, by:
  - enabling teachers to observe and share the exemplary practice in the school
  - developing the skills of senior and middle leaders in lesson observation and in providing developmental feedback for staff.

Yours sincerely

Sue Frater

**Her Majesty's Inspector**

## **Information about the inspection**

During the inspection, I met with you, other leaders, members of the governing body and a group of pupils. I spoke to pupils during lessons and scrutinised the quality of their work, especially in English, mathematics and science.

Together, we visited most classes and discussed our joint observations of teaching, learning, pupils' attitudes and their progress.

I examined a range of documents, including your self-evaluation and school development and improvement plan, and records relating to safeguarding, pupils' progress, attendance and behaviour, the performance management of teachers, and the local authority's evaluation of the school's performance. I took account of seven responses to the online Parent View survey and 13 responses to online questionnaires from staff and 19 from pupils.