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Mrs Jackie Naylor
Headteacher
The Henry Prince CofE (C) First School
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Dear Mrs Naylor

Short inspection of The Henry Prince CofE (C) First School

Following my visit to the school on 10 October 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 June 2013.

This school continues to be good.

The leadership team has maintained the good quality of education in the school since the last inspection. You, with the support of the governors, lead a school in which pupils are happy and keen to learn. Together with your staff, you show a determination to ensure that every pupil gets the best possible start to their school life. The great majority of parents spoke positively about the school. They commented on the good progress that their children are making and the high level of support provided by the staff. As one parent wrote: 'My children are very happy to go to school each day and always come home smiling. They are making great progress in all areas.'

The needs of pupils across the school are well catered for in a warm and nurturing environment. This is particularly true for those with special educational needs and/or disabilities, including social, emotional and mental health needs. Teachers and teaching assistants are enthusiastic and approachable, providing the pupils with good role models.

Pupils are proud of their school. For example, one pupil commented, 'We learn every day. Everyone is helpful and kind, and we all get along.' Pupils generally behave well and they develop into confident, polite and respectful individuals. Pupils enjoy lessons, trips and a wide range of activities, all of which help to bring the curriculum to life. For example, they talked enthusiastically about residential

trips, playing a musical instrument, taking part in sports activities and learning French.

At the time of the previous inspection, leaders and governors were asked to address some variations in the quality of teaching so that all pupils were able to make good progress across the school. You have taken effective action to tackle this through a combination of training for staff, a focus on identifying and addressing pupils' individual needs and the introduction of a new curriculum. As a result, almost all pupils are making good progress from their starting points and the great majority are working at the standard expected for their age. As they move through the school, results get stronger in all areas. The number of pupils achieving at the higher standards is starting to increase, particularly in reading and writing. However, pupils do not have regular enough opportunities to explain and justify their ideas. This is particularly the case in mathematics.

Leaders and governors were also asked to improve outcomes in writing. This has been successfully achieved. There has been a focus on improving the teaching of spelling, punctuation and grammar. Teachers now have clear expectations of the standards that pupils should be achieving and these are shared effectively with pupils. Pupils across the school have regular opportunities to write at length and in a variety of subjects. This develops their stamina for writing. The profile of writing is high across the whole school. For example, the 'wonderful writing' display in the school hall shows how pupils' writing develops from their earliest days in school through to the end of Year 4. In the early years, children always have access to a range of writing opportunities, both in the classroom and outdoors. However, across the school, pupils' written work is sometimes let down by poor standards of presentation. This applies to the general neatness of their work as well as to some pupils' handwriting. You are aware of this as an area that the school needs to focus on more explicitly.

You have effective assessment and monitoring systems in place to track the progress that pupils are making. As a result of regular reviews, you and your teachers know which pupils are at risk of falling behind and you identify actions to help them catch up. On a few occasions, these actions could be sharper so that you can track more effectively whether pupils are making the progress that they should. You do not currently identify the additional support that your most-able pupils need to help them achieve at the higher standards.

Your school website contains a lot of helpful information for parents and the school community. However, some information is currently out of date and a small number of aspects do not fully meet requirements. You and your governors agree that the website does need some improvement to more accurately reflect the quality of education that the school offers.

Safeguarding is effective.

There is an effective culture of safeguarding in the school. You ensure that the school is a safe environment for pupils and that they are well cared for at all times.

You make sure that all staff are alert to any potential issues and emphasise that safeguarding pupils is everyone's responsibility. Safeguarding arrangements are fit for purpose and records are stored securely.

All staff have regular and appropriate training to help them understand their responsibilities in keeping pupils safe from harm. Staff are clear about what they should do if they have any safeguarding concerns. You work with external agencies as necessary and you are persistent when there are concerns about a pupil's welfare. You have a good understanding of the specific safeguarding concerns that relate to the context of the school.

Pupils said that they feel safe in school and that they are taught to stay safe, for example when crossing the road or using the internet. Pupils know whom they can speak to in school if they have any worries or concerns. They value the advice they get from their teachers. As one pupil said, 'Teachers are always there to help us.' The vast majority of parents agree that their child feels safe and is safe in school.

Inspection findings

- Since the last inspection you have completely revised your curriculum in line with the new national curriculum and in partnership with local schools. While you have an appropriate focus on literacy and mathematics, the curriculum you offer is broad and balanced. Where possible, teachers make topics relevant to pupils' lives. For example, in the key stage 2 class, pupils spoke about the recent hurricane in America and made links to their current geography topic. Teachers carefully match tasks to pupils' needs and pupils are clear on what they need to do to be successful in each activity. Pupils receive feedback on a regular basis, often during the lesson, so they are able to make rapid progress and little time is wasted. Older pupils review their own progress and are clear about what they need to do to improve.
- There is a consistent approach to teaching phonics across the early years and key stage 1. In Year 1, the great majority of pupils reach the expected standard in the phonics screening check. Pupils use their phonics skills to decode unknown words and develop understanding and fluency appropriate for their age and ability. The promotion of reading is a strength across the school and pupils are expected to read regularly. They have access to a range of reading books and a well-resourced library.
- In mathematics you have focused on improving pupils' basic mathematics skills, including improving their mental calculation skills. Activities are provided at different levels and pupils are given work which is at the right level for them. This has had a positive impact on their outcomes. However, you are aware that currently much of the work that pupils complete has a single 'right' answer and does not require them to apply their knowledge or 'think deeply' about the task. As a result, you have identified that pupils need more regular opportunities to apply their knowledge to solving mathematical problems, to explain their understanding and to improve their reasoning skills.

- In the early years, children settle quickly and make good progress from their starting points. Routines at the start of the school year have been well established. Staff use every opportunity to develop the children's basic skills and they adapt the curriculum to engage the children's interests. For example, the current topic, 'journeys', has particularly engaged the boys, who have enjoyed making cardboard box 'cars', riding in a 'train' and going to the 'airport' in the role-play area. Since the last inspection, the outdoor area has been improved and now pupils have access to a range of resources to support all areas of their learning. Children are encouraged to select their own activities. This helps to develop their confidence and independence.
- Pupils enjoy coming to school. In 2016 attendance was similar to the national average at 96.0%. The school's own information shows that this improved to 96.7% in 2017. You carefully track the attendance of individual pupils and contact parents when attendance drops below an acceptable level. The procedures that you and your staff follow, including contacting parents on the first day of absence, help to ensure that pupils are safe and not at risk of going missing from education.

Next steps for the school

Leaders and those responsible for governance should ensure that:

- pupils further improve their rates of progress by having more opportunities to explain and justify their thinking in a variety of contexts, particularly in mathematics
- when reviewing pupils' progress, teachers focus on the specific actions required to help pupils make faster progress, including those who are most able
- work in pupils' books is presented to a high standard
- the school website is up to date and contains all the information required so that parents are fully informed about all aspects of school life.

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

Yours sincerely

Catherine Crooks
Her Majesty's Inspector

Information about the inspection

During this inspection, I met with you, members of your staff and three members of the governing body. I had a telephone conversation with a representative from the

local authority. I talked with parents at the start of the day and with pupils both formally and informally.

Together, we visited all classes, where we observed teaching and learning, spoke to some pupils and looked at examples of their work. We also reviewed a sample of books from the previous academic year. I observed pupils' behaviour in lessons and around school.

I reviewed a range of documents, including the school's own evaluation of its performance, documents relating to keeping pupils safe, attendance information and the most recent information about pupils' achievement. I considered 11 responses to Parent View, Ofsted's online questionnaire.