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Mrs Jo Blakeman  
Headteacher  
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Dear Mrs Blakeman

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

Following my visit to the school on 28 June 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 October 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 were appointed in September 2017. During your first year you have wasted no time in setting a clear and ambitious direction for the school. You have created a calm and purposeful learning environment for pupils and staff. Pupils are happy and achieve well across the school. All staff enjoy their jobs and almost all feel that the school has improved since the previous inspection. Parents also have very positive views and appreciate the good communication mechanisms in place, such as the text system and regular newsletters. Parents are also generous in their praise of the support that pupils who have special educational needs (SEN) and/or disabilities receive. A typical comment was, 'I want to say how fantastic the help is we have received at Highley.' Others said that their children are reluctant to go home at the end of the day.

The issues from the previous inspection have been addressed. You have invested in a new assessment system which enables teachers to use information gathered about pupils' abilities to inform their planning. Together with subject leaders, teachers identify gaps in pupils' learning and provide additional support where needed. This is particularly successful for pupils who have SEN and/or disabilities. These pupils make good progress from their starting points due to work which is carefully matched to their abilities, appropriate intervention programmes and

effective additional adult help. Teachers also regularly check their assessments with other colleagues in school, or in local schools, to ensure that their judgements are accurate.

You rightly recognise that there remains work to be done to improve teaching and raise outcomes further. Pupils' use of grammar, punctuation, and particularly spelling, is not secure. Results for pupils leaving Year 6 in 2016 and 2017 were below the national average. The quality of writing in current pupils' books is also hampered by this area of weakness. Pupils' use of mathematical reasoning needs further development as too few pupils are confident in explaining their thinking and pupils are therefore unable to demonstrate that they are working at greater depth. Attendance of some pupils also remains an issue. There are currently 27 pupils who are persistently absent. This affects their progress.

### **Safeguarding is effective.**

The strong safeguarding culture within the school has been maintained. Together with your safeguarding officer and governing body you ensure that pupils are safe. All staff receive regular training, including in child protection and preventing extremism and radicalisation. Staff are aware of the actions they need to take if they are concerned about a pupil's well-being. Swift action is taken to follow up reported incidents, either with parents, where appropriate, or external agencies. Together with your safeguarding manager and governors, you monitor safeguarding closely. For example, governors check policies and scrutinise audits that have been carried out. They rigorously follow safer recruitment procedures to make sure that those appointed are safe to work with children.

Pupils enjoy school and feel safe. They know about different forms of bullying but are adamant that this does not happen at Highley. An anti-bullying charter has been signed by all pupils and is prominently displayed in the school hall. Pupils sign the charter to 'pledge' that they will not tolerate bullying of any kind. They are confident to report any concerns to staff members, either directly or through the school 'worry box'. Those spoken to say that reported incidents are quickly dealt with and sorted out. Key messages about safety are delivered well through assemblies, workshops and visiting speakers. Age-appropriate programmes such as 'Respect Yourself', 'Stepping Out', 'My Life' and sex and relationships education provide pupils with important information in relation to keeping themselves safe. Parents and staff unanimously agree that pupils are safe at school.

### **Inspection findings**

- Together with your governing body, you have raised expectations of staff and pupils. You work in close partnership with your leadership team. Subject leaders make a good contribution to improving the quality of teaching and raising achievement. They have introduced new initiatives and led staff training on implementing and embedding new approaches to the teaching of English and mathematics. These initiatives are beginning to have a positive impact on outcomes at the end of Year 2 and Year 6. Teacher assessments for 2018, some

of which have been moderated by the local authority, show an increasing proportion of pupils working at the levels expected for their age in reading, writing and mathematics compared to 2017. Governors also have a good understanding of the school's strengths and weaknesses and provide good levels of challenge and support to you and your leadership team.

- Pupils demonstrate a good ability to write imaginatively and in a wide range of styles. A well-established system of planning, drafting and editing their work enables them to improve and refine their ideas. They add more complex vocabulary to bring their work to life. Teachers are creative in stimulating pupils' writing by using topical subjects. For example, pupils rose to the challenge of assuming the role of the England football manager to write a motivational speech for his team before their match against Belgium. Visiting authors are also invited into school, to help pupils improve their story-writing techniques. However, weaknesses in pupils' grammar, punctuation and spelling skills reduce the overall quality of their work. This is because teachers do not consistently pick up and address errors, especially in work outside of English lessons, such as topic work. Some pupils misspell common words, for example writing 'goes' as 'gows', and then repeat the error regularly. This embeds poor spelling rather than improving it.
- You have rightly prioritised mathematics as a key issue in your school development plan. To this end, you and your leaders monitor teaching and learning closely. Work in pupils' books shows that pupils are highly adept at number work and there is good coverage of other subject areas, such as data handling, shape and measure. Classroom displays act as helpful prompts to remind pupils of methods they can use. Teaching assistants provide good support for lower-ability pupils. You are keen to involve parents in their child's learning and have introduced parent workshops. During the inspection, Year 3 pupils enjoyed a mathematics morning working with family members. However, pupils' reasoning skills are at an early stage of development. Most pupils struggle to explain their methods or answers. This is because teachers do not question pupils deeply enough or allow pupils sufficient time in lessons to reach the more challenging tasks set, such as 'prove it'. Consequently, too few pupils are working at greater depth.
- You have taken positive action to improve attendance and reduce persistent absence. The school minibus is used effectively to collect targeted pupils from the community centre in the village. This helps parents who struggle to get their children to school on time because of dropping off pre-school children. You work in close collaboration with the education welfare officer. Records checked show that there has been some improvement in reducing persistent absence. For example, 19 of the 27 repeat offenders have improved their attendance this year. You follow up all absences stringently and report pupils as missing in education if a child leaves the school but does not have a follow-up address. Breakfast club provision, together with a new reward system, help encourage good attendance. Attendance figures have been negatively affected by an outbreak of chickenpox this term. Nevertheless, overall attendance this year remains below the national average and too many pupils are still persistently absent.

## **Next steps for the school**

Leaders and those responsible for governance should ensure that:

- teachers pick up and address common errors in pupils' grammar, punctuation and spelling in all subjects, not just English
- teachers develop pupils' reasoning skills in mathematics through deeper questioning and ensuring that pupils complete the more challenging tasks that are set
- attendance improves and is at least in line with the national average for all groups.

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

Yours sincerely

Heather Simpson  
**Her Majesty's Inspector**

## **Information about the inspection**

During the inspection, I met with you and members of your leadership team and governing body. I discussed the work of the school with you, including the processes and procedures in place for safeguarding. I visited several classrooms, spoke with pupils about their learning and looked at the work in their books. I talked to pupils at playtime to gather their views about the school.

I looked at a range of school documents, including the school's information about pupils' achievement. I also reviewed the school's own evaluation of its work, together with the school development plan. I took account of the 16 responses to Ofsted's online questionnaire Parent View and the school's own survey of parents' views. Additional information was collected from parents at the end of the school day. There were 21 responses to the staff questionnaire. Their views were fully considered.