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Mr Gary Read
Executive Headteacher
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Dear Mr Read

Short inspection of Whipton Barton Infants and Nursery School

Following my visit to the school on 28 March 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 March 2013.

This school continues to be good.

The leadership team has maintained the good quality of education in the school since the last inspection. There have been significant changes in leadership and governance. Some of these have been as a result of the federation with the neighbouring junior school. Governors are not complacent. They are proactive and keep abreast of the political landscape of education. They have engaged the support of local authority officers to provide an external view of the effectiveness of the school's work.

You took up the post of headteacher in September 2016 following the retirement of the previous headteacher. You are supported by your highly competent head of school. Together you form a strong team. You are nurturing a new but knowledgeable team of middle leaders. This is supporting swift school improvement. All leaders are highly focused on developing the quality of teaching, learning and assessment. Parents are pleased with the changes taking place. In particular, they value the new behaviour policy, as one parent, typical of many, commented, 'It is promoting good behaviour across the school.'

At the time of the previous inspection, leaders were asked to ensure that teachers matched work to pupils' abilities. Leaders' work to address this has been successful. There have been year-on-year improvements in pupils' outcomes at key stage 1. Pupils are on track to reach, and often exceed, the standards expected for their age. Leaders have been particularly successful in improving literacy outcomes at key stage 1. Reading is now a strength of the

school. For example, in 2016, outcomes in reading and writing were above the national average with a similar proportion of pupils achieving the high standard as those nationally. However, you recognise that there is still more work to be done in the early years to ensure that boys, in particular, reach good outcomes in writing.

Safeguarding is effective.

Pupils are safe. Designated safeguarding leaders are clear about their roles and responsibilities and have a good understanding of the local authority's threshold for intervention. The school uses early help facilities and the expertise of health professionals well. Consequently, families can access additional support. You and your team are not afraid to challenge the local authority's multi-agency safeguarding hub when you are not satisfied with the response or when other agencies are slow to react. Multi-agency support for the most vulnerable pupils is wide ranging and has a positive impact on pupils' well-being, progress and attendance. Your head of school is assiduous in ensuring that the provision for pupils who are looked after by the local authority leads to their speedy academic progress and strong sense of worth.

You have ensured that all staff and governors are trained to a high level. Leaders' thorough induction procedures for new staff prepare staff well to be alert to signs of abuse. Consequently, staff are confident identifying pupils at risk and pass their concerns on immediately. Leaders ensure that child protection records are maintained meticulously. The records reflect vigilant observations. Governors have followed up on the outstanding actions from the annual safeguarding audit that the local authority expects. Consequently, procedures this year have been enhanced.

Inspection findings

- My first line of enquiry focused on the effectiveness of teaching, learning and assessment in the early years. In 2016, the proportion of children reaching a good level of development was well below the national average. This deficit has been tackled robustly. Positive changes in staffing have occurred. You have maintained a close eye on the progress of the children who underachieved. Better systems for checking on the quality of teaching and learning are now in place. Effective teaching has led to speedy progress so that children are back on track.
- You engaged the support of local authority advisers to assist the new early years leader in driving improvements across the Nursery and Reception classes. As a result, learning environments are purposeful and well organised. The strong focus on children's personal, social and emotional development is beginning to pay dividends. Children happily learn alongside each other. They respond well to adults and explore the environment safe from harm. Improvements over the last year have paved the way for better outcomes. Children are making good progress. In particular, carefully planned support

for those children who enter the early years with low starting points is leading to swift progress. However, you recognise that there is still a distance to travel before some of the exceptionally high-quality practice that is leading to children's accelerated progress is consistent across all classes.

- Next, I focused on how leaders are ensuring that the early years provision helps children off to a good start with their writing, and in particular for boys. Historically, boys' writing has lagged behind the girls' and other boys nationally. High-quality teaching in phonics is leading to above national standards for all children, including boys. Children are well equipped in the technical aspects of reading and writing. There is very little difference between boys and girls in this respect. Your leaders have focused on engaging approaches to develop the boys' mark-making skills early on in the Nursery. This is beginning to bear fruit as boys develop their coordination skills and readily engage in mark-making activities. However, leaders recognise that there is more to do to inspire boys in the Reception classes so that they choose to write and apply their good phonic knowledge.
- My third line of enquiry centred on the effectiveness of leaders in deploying additional funds so that disadvantaged pupils make good progress. The proportion of pupils entitled to the additional funding is higher than the national average. Historically, fewer disadvantaged pupils achieved the higher standards than other pupils nationally. The improved quality of teaching, learning and assessment has resulted in these differences diminishing. More of the most able disadvantaged pupils went on to achieve a higher standard than others nationally in reading and writing in 2016 at the end of Year 2. In addition, a greater proportion of the middle-ability disadvantaged pupils achieve a high standard in these subjects. However, you and your governing body are not complacent. You are reviewing strategies to develop the evaluation of expenditure of additional funding so that decisions taken will support even more pupils to make speedy progress.
- My fourth line of enquiry focused on the effectiveness of teaching, learning and assessment in providing challenge for the most able mathematicians. Although there is an improving picture, 2016 early years and end of Year 2 outcomes show that proportion of pupils who reach the highest standard in mathematics is lower than the national average. Current outcomes show that the most able mathematicians remain on track to achieve a high standard. However, you have recognised that middle-ability pupils do not have a sound grasp of number facts. They are less confident than others in applying facts to solve problems and this slows down their progress. Your leaders are ably supporting staff in developing their subject knowledge and expertise to support these pupils. Your observations and the work in books show that there are some encouraging signs of progress. Pupils are beginning to make links between what they know. Their 'maths talk' is helping them draw upon number facts with greater ease.
- My final line of enquiry focused on the effectiveness of the arrangements to safeguard pupils, including pupils' attendance. Very regular attendance checks enable leaders to keep a close eye on vulnerable pupils' attendance and well-being. Leaders follow up any absence robustly. Consequently, pupils'

attendance has risen to be at least in line with the national average. Persistent absence has fallen dramatically and is now below the historic national average. Pupils appear happy, keen to learn and typically show their enjoyment of school through their high engagement in lessons.

Next steps for the school

Leaders and those responsible for governance should ensure that:

- best practice is shared so that the early years provision is consistently strong and, in particular, improving outcomes for boys' writing
- pupils, and in particular middle-ability pupils, recall and apply their knowledge of facts accurately and rapidly in mathematics.

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

Yours sincerely

Tracy Hannon
Her Majesty's Inspector

Information about the inspection

During the inspection, senior leaders joined me observing learning in classrooms. We looked at a number of pupils' books. I spoke with pupils in lessons. I held meetings with you, your head of school, with middle leaders and with three members of the governing body. I also held telephone conversations with two local authority officers.

I scrutinised a wide range of documentation, including the school's own self-evaluation and development plan, assessment information and safeguarding records. I considered the views of 22 parents who responded to Parent View.