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Piccadilly Gate
Store Street
Manchester
M1 2WD

T 0300 123 4234
www.gov.uk/ofsted



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Mrs Sally Short
Headteacher
Hobletts Manor Junior School
Adeyfield Road
Hemel Hempstead
Hertfordshire
HP2 5JS

Dear Mrs Short

Short inspection of Hobletts Manor Junior 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 July 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 have a strong, caring team, which is committed to making the school one where all pupils are valued equally. Staff responding to the survey were universally positive about the school. Over the past few years, pupils have achieved exceptionally well in writing at the end of key stage 2, which is a real strength of the school. Leaders have an accurate understanding of the school's strengths. They have used the outcomes from national tests in reading and mathematics and the priorities from the previous inspection to drive improvements.

Pupils are polite and well mannered. They enjoy coming to school and feel their teachers 'understand' them. Pupils talked positively about the 'peaceful problem-solving strategy' which has helped them to understand and resolve any issues of conflict. Pupils enjoy a range of subjects and feel that they are well prepared for secondary school.

Parents are very positive about the school. Many parents commented that their children are happy to come to school and how settled they are. Parents appreciate the support, care and guidance that you and your staff provide for their children. Many parents commented positively on the extra-curricular provision the school offers, and they appreciate the wide range of before- and after-school clubs that the school provides.

At the time of the previous inspection, inspectors commented on the many strengths of the school, including the good leadership and the positive, harmonious community the school had developed. Inspectors also identified the need to improve teaching further by helping pupils to learn at a good pace and allowing pupils enough time to finish tasks and consolidate their learning.

The school has appointed several new teachers since the last inspection. You have ensured that teaching has remained good by rigorously monitoring the quality of provision and providing helpful feedback and support to help teachers improve. Inspectors also identified the need to provide more opportunities for pupils to use their good information and communication technology skills to support their learning. You have addressed this and pupils now have more opportunities to apply their skills.

You acknowledge that you can do more to increase the number of pupils reaching higher levels in their reading. You also agree that you need to continue to support the most able pupils and the pupils for whom the school receives pupil premium funding to do better in mathematics. Pupils' attendance has improved but you agree that this improvement needs to continue through the support you provide.

Governors are highly committed and fulfil their responsibilities effectively. They share your high expectations for pupils and know the school well, including its strengths and areas for development. The governors make regular visits to the school and receive useful information from you on how well pupils are doing. They work with you to monitor and evaluate the impact of improvement actions. Governors are fully involved in deciding the school's next steps. Leadership and management have been strengthened through the school investing in specific training to further develop middle leadership. The school also procured support from the local authority to assist them in their work to drive forward improvements in reading and mathematics.

Safeguarding is effective.

Leaders, including governors, have ensured that all safeguarding arrangements are fit for purpose. Leaders with responsibility for safeguarding undertake appropriate training. They ensure that staff receive regular training in safeguarding to enable them to follow the school's procedures. The school's records are detailed and maintained well. They show where there has been involvement of support agencies, with actions followed up in a timely way.

Pupils told me that they always feel safe in school and know that they have adults in school who will listen and help. Pupils have a good understanding of bullying. One pupil said, 'Bullying hurts you on the inside and outside.' E-safety is promoted well throughout the school, which ensures that pupils know how to stay safe online. A very large majority of the 65 parents who responded to Ofsted's online questionnaire, Parent View, agreed that their children are kept safe.

Inspection findings

- During the inspection, we agreed to review pupils' outcomes in reading. This was because, in the past, pupils have been achieving well below the national average. Pupils now make good progress in reading. In 2017, the proportion of pupils achieving the expected standard in reading in Year 6 was just above average.
- Following the decline in reading standards in 2016, you have taken effective action. You have concentrated on improving teaching in reading, with a focus on vocabulary, for all pupils across the school. Expectations in reading have risen and successes are celebrated in a variety of ways, including through displays in the school. Pupils talk positively about reading and understand the new expectations. They appreciate the time they spend in the library reading books. Pupils were able to discuss different authors and commented on how books can help you 'learn new things'. One pupil said he enjoyed stories with 'cliffhangers', as they 'opened up his imagination'. As a result, last year, each year group has made good progress in reading.
- Although the proportion of pupils achieving the higher standard in reading increased in 2017, this remained below average. You agree that the school needs to increase the proportion of pupils reaching the higher standards. The new reading challenge to increase pupils' stamina in reading has already encouraged pupils to read more widely and more often.
- Our visits to the classrooms, the assessment information you provided and the scrutiny of books showed that the most able pupils are now making good progress in mathematics due to the actions you have put in place. However, we agreed that, although pupils are challenged to work at greater depth, this often does not happen quickly enough. Although pupils enjoy mathematics because it is fun, those pupils who felt that they were good at mathematics sometimes found the work too easy.
- The mathematics leader has led training on a new approach to developing pupils' mathematical skills, which has increased teachers' subject knowledge. Pupils spoke positively about the different strategies they have learned and the mathematics resources they now use. Parents have attended workshops and taken part in family mathematics challenges. These have increased parental confidence in supporting their children at home. One parent commented: 'Parent workshops are relevant and packed with great examples and advice on progressing your child from help given at home.'
- We also reviewed the outcomes for pupils known to be eligible for pupil premium funding. This was because disadvantaged pupils have achieved less well than non-disadvantaged pupils in school and nationally in reading and mathematics. In 2017, disadvantaged pupils made good progress in reading. The number of pupils achieving the expected standard in reading was in line with all other pupils nationally. However, you agree that disadvantaged pupils need to achieve better in mathematics. The school is taking part in a pilot project to increase the proportion of disadvantaged pupils achieving the expected standard in mathematics. Current school assessment information shows that disadvantaged pupils in all year groups are making good progress.

- We considered the attendance of pupils who have special educational needs and/or disabilities and pupils known to be eligible for pupil premium funding. The actions leaders have taken have improved attendance for all groups, which is currently higher than the attendance rates last year. We agreed that, while attendance has improved, it remains below average. You have identified issues which prevent some pupils attending well and have tailored individual support. Rigorous monitoring shows an improvement in attendance for each pupil receiving the support.
- Leaders work hard to ensure a good partnership with parents. If an issue arises, leaders follow the school procedures, seek advice if necessary and reflect on their practice, adapting policies if needed. A very large majority of parents who responded to Ofsted's online questionnaire, Parent View, agreed that the school responds well to any concerns that they raise. One parent stated: 'Hobletts is an amazing school, which always listens and responds to all our concerns or requests.'

Next steps for the school

Leaders and those responsible for governance should ensure that:

- more pupils achieve higher levels in reading
- the most able pupils progress more quickly in mathematics in order to work at a greater depth
- pupils eligible for pupil premium funding make more rapid progress in mathematics
- recent improvements in the attendance of all pupils, including those who have special educational needs and/or disabilities and pupils eligible for pupil premium funding, are sustained.

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

Rachel Welch
Ofsted Inspector

Information about the inspection

I met with you and other members of your senior team to discuss progress since the previous inspection and to agree the key lines of enquiry for the inspection. I also met with a group of governors, including the chair, and a representative from the local authority, as well as the school council.

I scrutinised a variety of sources of information, including your self-evaluation, the plans for improvement and assessment information for all year groups. I also examined the school's safeguarding and child protection procedures, the records of checks leaders make on the suitability of staff to work with children and information regarding attendance. We visited lessons and looked at books in all classes across the school. I also looked at 59 responses to the online questionnaire, Parent View, six paper copies and 28 staff survey returns.