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Mrs Sue Barnes
Headteacher
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Dear Mrs Barnes

Short inspection of The John Hampden School

Following my visit to the school on 2 October 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 December 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, along with your governors and dedicated staff team, are determined to provide the best possible opportunities for pupils. The school's ethos of 'loving to learn', alongside the seven key values – perseverance, independence, belonging, collaboration, reflection, good manners and respect – drive your decisions and processes.

High expectations and warm, caring relationships ensure that children make good or better progress, particularly in English and mathematics. The school is a calm, welcoming and nurturing environment. Pupils' behaviour is exemplary, and pupils are polite both to staff and to each other. Parents and carers overwhelmingly support the work of the school. One parent said, 'My child is thriving here', and another told me, 'The progress my child made in foundation stage is unbelievable'.

You and your deputy headteacher have provided highly effective leadership which has led to substantial improvements in attainment across the school. Outcomes at the end of Year 2 have been well above the national average in reading, writing and mathematics for the last two years.

Pupils enjoy their school and love to learn. They settle well into the foundation stage classes and quickly become confident learners. Pupils quickly develop

independence and resilience, and as a result, they make rapid progress in all areas of learning. This good progress continues in key stage 1, where teachers focus strongly on developing pupils' confidence in phonics, spelling, handwriting and understanding of number. Pupils are challenged appropriately, and develop the ability to choose suitably difficult work, particularly in mathematics. Pupils enjoy having the opportunity to try harder work and solve problems. However, pupils' reasoning skills in mathematics are less well developed.

Your detailed self-evaluation clearly identifies the strengths and areas for improvement, with the most important priorities linking effectively with the school improvement plan. The plan provides staff, governors and others with practical actions to ensure that the school gets even better. You have identified the need to raise expectations across the wider curriculum to deepen pupils' knowledge, skills and understanding further, so that expectations in other subjects are as high as in English and mathematics.

Leaders, staff and governors have addressed the areas of improvement identified at the previous inspection. Teachers plan tasks that are matched well to the learning needs of pupils, including, particularly, boys. The curriculum provision has been reviewed and now includes opportunities for all pupils to explore areas that interest and motivate them. Pupils enjoy the range of trips and extra-curricular activities that support their learning. For example, the recent Year 2 visit to the Roald Dahl Museum and Story Centre was used as an effective stimulus for writing. The teaching of phonics is now a strength of the school, with outcomes having been above national figures for the last three years. The progress of groups is checked carefully by leaders, and appropriate support is put in place to tackle any underachievement.

Safeguarding is effective.

You and your governors place a high priority on keeping pupils safe. You have implemented policies and practice that are effective and fit for purpose. Staff and governors are well trained to keep them informed of their responsibilities to keep pupils safe. Your staff handbook ensures that everyone has the information they need if they have concerns about a child.

Leaders have been proactive in addressing the lower attendance of some groups of pupils, providing effective individualised support for families who need it. As a result, absence figures are reducing.

Pupils told me that they feel safe and well cared for at school, and parents and staff agree. The school's curriculum helps pupils understand how to stay safe. For instance, pupils enjoy the health and safety week where they learn how to keep safe in a range of situations, including how to stay safe online. Pupils are confident that any worries or concerns will be dealt with quickly.

Inspection findings

- During the inspection, I met with you and your deputy to discuss the school's progress since the last inspection. We agreed the following key lines of enquiry: how well leaders have improved teaching since the last inspection so that work is well matched to pupils' needs, especially for boys; how effectively leaders have ensured that pupils make the progress they should from the end of the early years foundation stage; and how well leaders have provided a broad and balanced curriculum which helps pupils prepare for their next steps in education and for life in modern Britain.
- Teaching has improved since the last inspection. Tasks are set that now match the learning needs of different groups of learners, including, specifically, the needs of boys. The curriculum has been adapted to include topics that appeal both to boys and to girls. Pupils are now routinely asked which aspects they would like to learn more about. Pupils' outcomes across the school show that boys and girls achieve above national figures in the early years foundation stage, in the Year 1 phonics screening, and in the assessments made at the end of Year 2.
- During my visits to lessons, it was clear that pupils engage well in their learning. They were keen to participate in paired discussions, and shared their ideas with each other. Support staff are used extremely well to support the learning of different groups. Teachers focus on developing pupils' confidence in basic skills such as handwriting, spelling and number fluency. As a result, almost all pupils make good or better progress in reading, writing and mathematics. However, pupils' reasoning skills in mathematics are less well developed.
- Children make exceptional progress from their starting points in early years, receiving high-quality teaching and exciting learning opportunities based on play. From an early age, they become confident learners, and gain a deep understanding of the values of the school and the golden rules. This ensures that they are ready to learn. As a result, children learn to read and write well, and gain a very sound understanding of number work. Children leave the early years foundation stage having achieved well above the national average.
- Leaders ensure that pupils continue to make good progress across key stage 1. Effective analysis of the school's assessment information identifies pupils who might be falling behind. Appropriate support is then put in place to help pupils catch up. Pupils with special educational needs (SEN) and/or disabilities are very well supported across the school and make good progress from their starting points. Disadvantaged pupils receive additional help with their learning, and more are now achieving age-related expectations. Pupils from service families value the guidance they receive from staff and from the nurture support coordinator.
- The curriculum is broad and balanced, providing a wide range of learning opportunities. Staff act on the firm principle that 'children are at the heart of the curriculum', planning work that meets pupils' specific individual learning needs and interests. Special weeks, such as 'enterprise week' and 'world week' are used effectively to supplement pupils' learning. Pupils also have good opportunities to be involved in extra-curricular visits and a variety of clubs, such as those for

French, art and craft, yoga, singing and computers. Pupils' thinking skills are developed well during their philosophy lessons, where they confidently share their views by debating issues and dilemmas. Pupils also gain an understanding of different cultures and beliefs through the school's focus on celebrating diversity. However, the application of pupils' knowledge, skills and understanding in other subjects is not as strong as in English and mathematics.

- Pupils' high achievement, the school's focus on developing pupils' understanding of the core values, and the strong transition programmes, ensure that pupils are very well prepared for the next stage in their education.

Next steps for the school

Leaders and those responsible for governance should ensure that:

- teachers provide more opportunities for pupils to develop their reasoning skills in mathematics
- pupils' knowledge, skills and understanding are developed further across the wider curriculum, so that pupils' skills in other subjects are as strong as they are in English and 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 Buckinghamshire. This letter will be published on the Ofsted website.

Yours sincerely

Mo Galway
Ofsted Inspector

Information about the inspection

I met with you, other school leaders, pupils and members of the governing body. I also spoke to your local authority improvement adviser. I visited classes and scrutinised a range of pupils' work with you and your deputy headteacher. I took account of 20 staff responses and 17 pupil responses to the online questionnaires. I also considered 129 responses by parents to Ofsted's online questionnaire, Parent View. I observed pupils' behaviour at breaktime and around the school. I spoke to a number of parents at the beginning of the school day. I analysed a range of the school's documentation, including information about pupils' achievement. I also looked at the school development plan and a range of policies and procedures, including those for safeguarding. We also discussed your own evaluation of the school's effectiveness.