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Mrs Jane Goodlace
Headteacher
Harlands Primary School
Penland Road
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Dear Mrs Goodlace

Short inspection of Harlands Primary School

Following my visit to the school on 27 June 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 your predecessor school was judged to be good in February 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 built a strong team of teachers and support staff who work effectively to support pupils' good achievement and well-being. Staff are committed to providing a rich and varied curriculum so that pupils enjoy coming to school.

The previous inspection took place prior to the school's conversion to academy status. At that time, inspectors identified pupils' positive attitudes to learning, their good behaviour and good attendance as strengths of the school. Inspectors also praised your strong leadership and that of your team. You have maintained and built on these strengths over the last four years.

The vast majority of pupils pay close attention in lessons and show a high level of respect to their teachers and peers. Pupils said, 'Everyone follows the rules.' These rules were devised by pupils themselves. They say that a warning usually suffices to stop any silly behaviour. Consequently, pupils are able to focus well on their learning. Around the school, pupils move sensibly between lessons, showing good manners as they hold doors or stand aside to let others pass. Attendance remains above the national average.

You have created a strong and effective senior leadership team. Despite changes in the personnel over the past two years, senior leaders have continued to evaluate the school's work rigorously. You are all relentless in your drive to improve standards,

carefully identifying key priorities for the school to work on. For example, you acknowledge that improving pupils' progress in Year 1 is a key priority, as well as increasing the proportion of children who exceed the early learning goal in writing. Nevertheless, you are developing a skilled team of middle leaders who are keen to take on responsibilities to develop the school. This is further increasing the school's capacity to improve.

At the inspection of the predecessor school, inspectors recommended that pupils were given more opportunities to write across a range of subjects. You have tackled this recommendation successfully. Teachers help pupils to plan their work in ways which suit them best, and pupils now produce a variety of writing across the curriculum. Writing is very often linked to purposeful outcomes such as displays or letters, so that pupils are motivated to try hard and present their work carefully. As a result, there are high standards in writing by the end of Year 6.

Teachers encourage pupils to choose tasks at the right level of challenge in lessons, helping them to become more engaged in their learning. However, you acknowledge that raising standards in Year 1 is a key priority. In addition, pupils are encouraged to think for themselves, for example solving playground issues with peer mediators or when compiling a school newspaper. Such opportunities promote pupils' problem-solving skills and creativity.

Harlands is an active school where pupils enjoy learning. Parents appreciate the rich curriculum. They made positive comments about the 'fantastic' production of 'Joseph' the night before the inspection, which included singing and playing from children across the school. A very high proportion of pupils take advantage of the many extra-curricular clubs on offer. These include an impressive range of sports, including boccia, basketball and tennis. Pupils are proud to represent their school at the wide range of sports competitions, which include district and county tournaments. Art is also a strength, as demonstrated by the high-quality displays around the school. Science, technology and mathematics are promoted through activities such as 'Goblin' car racing. Pupils are encouraged to play an active part in their community, with older pupils learning to take on responsibility through jobs such as hall monitor or recycling.

Safeguarding is effective.

Safety is a top priority at Harlands. You make all the right checks on adults who come into contact with children. There is an annual training session for all staff to ensure that everyone is up to date with the latest guidance. In addition, you hold regular staff briefings to inform staff of any new advice and alert relevant staff to any concerns. This helps keep safeguarding at the forefront of everyone's mind. When necessary, you quickly involve other agencies to ensure that pupils get the early help they need. Governors ensure that there are regular checks of the building and that the site is kept secure. A parent also noted that there are robust collection arrangements in place.

Pupils across the school are taught to keep themselves safe. The curriculum includes sessions on the dangers caused by looking directly at the sun, fire safety and road safety. Pupils know that they need to take care on the internet and what to do if they

are ever bullied. The school's positive and inclusive ethos was summed up by one pupil who said, 'We always get taught to respect others – you rarely see people being rude.'

Inspection findings

- At the start of the inspection, we agreed to focus on the following areas: the effectiveness of safeguarding; provision for disadvantaged pupils; the effectiveness of teaching, especially writing, in the early years and key stage 1; how well leaders have developed strategies to strengthen pupils' progress in writing; how well the school prepares pupils for the next stage of their education and life in modern Britain.
- Your deputy headteacher carefully checks the achievement of the small number of pupils eligible for free school meals. You ensure that the right provision is in place for these pupils, including best practice found in other schools. You quickly and sensitively respond to each pupil's individual needs, for example motivating them to attend school regularly. As a result of this well-thought-out support, disadvantaged pupils, including the most able, all make good progress from their different starting points, in line with their peers.
- Standards in the early years dipped in 2016, with a smaller proportion of children reaching a good level of development than the national average. Your analysis indicated that the main reason for this was children's weaker standards in writing. You reacted swiftly to rectify this. Consequently, you provided useful training for staff as well as ensuring that children this year were given more opportunities to write at an earlier stage. As a result of this effective action, the proportion of children reaching a good level of development has risen above the 2016 national average this year, with standards in writing also just above last year's national average. However, you remain ambitious for all your pupils. You are already planning to ensure that the most able children all achieve as well as they should in writing.
- Attainment for the current Year 1 cohort is weaker than other year groups in the school, especially in writing. Workbooks of former Year 1 pupils indicate that writing is usually stronger and this year group is an exception. You have taken steps to tackle these low standards by providing interventions with clear targets to aim for. Although too many pupils attain standards below those expected for their age, they are nonetheless making progress to catch up. It is commendable that, despite their low starting points, the proportion of Year 1 pupils meeting the expected standard in the phonics screening check is in line with the 2016 national average. You are rightly planning to continue to overcome barriers to learning for this cohort so that they can catch up with where they should be by the end of Year 2.
- Across the rest of the school, you have put effective strategies in place to strengthen pupils' progress in writing. Pupils are motivated to write because teachers choose topics which reflect their interests. Pupils also enjoy choosing how to present their ideas, for example in a leaflet, poster or news report, which stimulates their creativity. Teachers encourage younger pupils to talk through their ideas so that they have the right sentences in mind when they are ready to write. These approaches are helping pupils to make good progress.
- As well as helping pupils learn about democracy, the active school council allows pupils to express their views constructively. They learn to organise events and

consider important aspects such as health and safety, for example in planning the forthcoming nature day. Many visitors and trips enhance learning, including the Year 6 journey to the Isle of Wight. Pupils understood how this trip prepared them for secondary school, saying, 'We had to do things for ourselves.' They also learned the need to be punctual. Activities such as abseiling presented challenges for some, but also helped pupils learn about the importance of peer support. As one pupil wrote, 'Facing your fears can be hard but when you're with your friends it's easier.' Pupils learn many skills at Harlands, which prepare them well both for the next stage of their education and as future citizens.

Next steps for the school

Leaders and those responsible for governance should ensure that:

- the achievement of pupils currently in Year 1 improves, so that outcomes in reading, writing and mathematics by the end of Year 2 are close to the national average
- in early years, a higher proportion of the most able pupils exceed the expected standard for their age in writing.

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

Yours sincerely

Amanda Gard
Ofsted Inspector

Information about the inspection

I met with you, the senior leadership team, the deputy headteacher, the key stage 1 leader, literacy subject leaders, the designated safeguarding lead, governors and a group of pupils. I visited classes in the early years together with your key stage 1 leader, and accompanied you on a tour of the school. I spoke to parents at the start of the school day and took into account 27 responses to Ofsted's online questionnaire, Parent View. I also considered 27 staff survey responses. I reviewed a range of pupils' work and documentation provided by the school, including information about pupils' progress, your own evaluation of the school's effectiveness and records of safeguarding checks, policies and procedures.