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Piccadilly Gate
Store Street
Manchester
M1 2WD

T 0300 123 4234
www.gov.uk/ofsted



28 March 2019

Ms Samantha Phillips
Headteacher
Hopping Hill Primary School
Pendle Road
Duston
Northampton
Northamptonshire
NN5 6DT

Dear Ms Phillips

Short inspection of Hopping Hill Primary School

Following my visit to the school on 7 March 2019, 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 2015.

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 worked closely with other senior leaders and members of the governing body to identify the school's strengths and where the school needs to do better. The school's leaders at all levels are relentless in their pursuit of high-quality teaching and support for pupils. You allow no complacency and the school continues to improve at pace. You have introduced key initiatives to drive improvements and you make sure that all staff benefit from well-selected training.

Governors are using their extensive skills well to heighten challenge to the school's leaders. Governors shared examples of incisive questions generated following careful analysis of the pupils' 2018 test results. Governors' thorough evaluation of the performance information, along with your accurate assessment of the quality of teaching, have led the school to focus on the right actions for improvement.

You and the school's leaders have effective systems for checking the quality of teaching to ensure that pupils are achieving. You and leaders have worked hard to ensure that the curriculum provides rich opportunities to promote learning for pupils. As a result, pupils are currently achieving well, most notably in mathematics. However, some pupils still underachieve in reading, and you are working hard to match the improvements in mathematics. Teachers provide a wide range of opportunities for pupils to learn well, for example through the 'whole class' reading programme. As a result, pupils are reading more frequently and enjoy access to

good-quality texts. One pupil told me: 'I loved reading "The Iron Man" by Ted Hughes.' The school's focus on improving vocabulary is bearing fruit. Those pupils I heard reading out loud were confident and able to explain the meanings of words.

You place a strong emphasis on pupils' welfare and in ensuring that pupils are ready to learn. Pupils enjoy coming to school and enjoy their learning. They behave very well and respect each other's ideas and views. Pupils told me that bullying is very rare at Hopping Hill but that staff will take rapid and effective action to deal with any problems that may occur. Almost all parents who responded to the online survey, Parent View, confirm that their children are happy and safe at school. Typical of their comments was: 'Hopping Hill is an incredible place. It's not just a school, it's a family. My child feels important, valued and safe.'

Leaders have had significant success in addressing the areas for improvement that were identified in the last inspection. Although the progress pupils are making in mathematics has improved, leaders have been less successful in improving the progress pupils are making in reading, especially for the most able pupils and middle-ability pupils. We focused our attention on reading during this inspection, to see how much progress pupils are making now.

Safeguarding is effective.

You and your leaders ensure that safeguarding is given the highest priority across the school. There are strong systems in place for checking the suitability of adults working in school and governors regularly review the school's procedures, including the impact of the safeguarding policy.

Records show that staff are effective at identifying risks to pupils. Concerns are recorded promptly and referrals made appropriately. Required training is completed in time and supplemented with frequent updates so that nothing is left to chance. Records relating to the safeguarding of pupils are comprehensive and monitored closely.

Pupils are taught how to look after themselves and know how to keep safe, including when using technology. Pupils were clear that the adults in school look after them well and keep them safe.

Inspection findings

- During our initial discussion, we identified reading as a key line of enquiry. This was because in the past, pupils' progress in this subject was not as strong as in other areas of the school's work. Further, the proportion of pupils who have made sufficient progress through key stage 2, since 2016, has been significantly below the national average.
- Since the previous inspection, leaders have reviewed the school's approach to the teaching of reading. Teachers have received guidance and are providing pupils with more experiences to develop their comprehension skills. You invested in high-quality reading materials and introduced a 'whole class' reading programme

where pupils discuss books at length. Pupils told me that they like this approach to the teaching of reading, particularly when teachers ask questions about what is written in books. As a consequence, pupils are developing the skills of inference and deduction. As well as this, teachers introduce new and challenging words regularly to broaden pupils' vocabulary. Staff and volunteers hear pupils read frequently. Leaders value the positive effects of parents and carers reading at home, and provide additional reading opportunities for those pupils where there is little home support.

- Pupils enjoy reading opportunities at school and the curriculum events which promote reading, such as World Book Day. Pupils spoke very positively about the school's 'book club' and the broad range of books available to them to read. When visiting classrooms, I saw pupils from different year groups reading books to each other and sharing ideas about plot, characterisation and themes.
- There is good evidence that most pupils are making better progress now in reading. However, there remains some underachievement for those pupils who have not yet developed the comprehension skills to deepen their understanding of the text.
- The second area of focus was the attainment and progress of disadvantaged pupils in all subjects, other than in phonics. This was because the proportions of pupils achieving the expected standard in reading, writing and mathematics in 2018 were below those found nationally.
- School staff provide a number of opportunities for disadvantaged pupils so that they can access their learning, attend school on time and take part in enrichment activities. Work in pupils' books demonstrates that disadvantaged pupils are making good progress over time. Leaders have appointed selected staff as 'ambassadors' who oversee the welfare of this group of pupils. The careful training provided for staff by leaders is ensuring that barriers to learning are beginning to be reduced or removed altogether. However, there remains some underachievement for disadvantaged pupils, and ensuring their access to a wide range of cultural experiences continues to be a priority for the school.
- Finally, given that pupils' progress in phonics has been strong since 2016, I wanted to establish whether pupils were transferring their skills, and reading successfully. Phonics provision is a strength of the school's work. Staff plan exciting learning tasks which engage the pupils and extend their understanding of the sounds letters make.
- Staff training has been comprehensive and, as a result, staff are skilful in the teaching of phonics. The school's organisation of how phonics is taught is effective: pupils work in smaller groups matched to their needs, and pupils engage well with texts. Pupils use their phonic skills to read unknown words, and generally read with fluency, expression and understanding. It was clear from speaking with pupils that staff ask questions which are precise and specific, and designed to promote pupils' comprehension and higher-order reading skills.

Next steps for the school

Leaders and those responsible for governance should ensure that they:

- continue to provide support and challenge so that all pupils, especially those who are disadvantaged, make accelerated progress in reading
- further develop the wider curriculum, so that pupils have access to a wide range of cultural experiences.

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

Yours sincerely

Damien Turrell
Ofsted Inspector

Information about the inspection

I held discussions with you, senior leaders and governors about the school and the actions you are taking to improve it. I met with other leaders to discuss the work they are doing to improve reading across the school. I observed work in lessons during learning walks, which took place across the school with some of your leadership team. During this time, a sample of pupils' work was reviewed as well as the systems for checking how well pupils are doing. I spoke with a group of pupils and heard them read. In addition to this, I analysed a range of school documents linked to the school's evaluation, safeguarding and improvement priorities. I looked at 58 responses to Ofsted's online questionnaire, Parent View.