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Mrs Susan Bird
Headteacher
Hamp Nursery and Infants' School
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Dear Mrs Bird

Short inspection of Hamp Nursery and Infants' School

Following my visit to the school on 21 November 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.

You provide strong leadership and the drive and ambition to ensure that children leave the school well equipped for their next steps in learning. Governors and your skilled senior leadership team share your determined approach and high expectations. Your dedicated staff also fully sustain the school's high commitment to developing the personal and academic needs of each pupil as effectively as possible.

You ensure that leaders at all levels, including governors, play important roles in checking the performance of the school and do so accurately. Consequently, leaders are knowledgeable and well informed and contribute effectively to identifying the right priorities and driving improvement. Governors provide you with effective levels of support and challenge and hold you to account for bringing about improvement. For example, they fully support your sustained development of the school's facilities, especially outdoors. The widened range of practical activities now provided, especially for younger children, is motivating boys in particular to contribute more to their learning and make good progress.

Staff work diligently as a team to provide a welcoming community for the pupils. One governor commented, 'Our staff work hard to make our school a calm and happy place to learn.' Under your guidance, staff provide stimulating learning experiences for the pupils. Consequently, pupils behave extremely well and learn

happily and productively together. One parent wrote, 'My daughter has blossomed at this school. She is so comfortable in her class and really likes her teachers.'

The school has made significant improvements in several areas since the previous inspection. You sustain a strong focus on boosting pupils' self-confidence in learning. This begins with an innovative 'soft start' to the day, much appreciated by parents and their children, as they are personally welcomed by staff on arrival at the school. In turn, you further extend pupils' confidence in learning by purposefully developing their speaking and listening skills, thereby enabling them to share and develop their ideas with each other. Your successful focus on a key issue of the previous inspection, namely extending pupils' understanding of mathematical terms, continues to quicken the development of their calculation and reasoning skills.

Safeguarding is effective.

There is a strong culture of safeguarding in the school. It is underpinned by the diligent way that all staff get to know each pupil and their family. Leaders ensure that all safeguarding arrangements are fit for purpose and that effective action is taken to safeguard pupils. Senior leaders, governors and experienced administrative staff ensure that checks on staff and visitors to the school are completed effectively.

All staff receive frequent and appropriate training, for example about the 'Prevent' duty to protect pupils from the influence of radical or extreme views. Leaders work well with external agencies and know when and how to make referrals if they have concerns about pupils. Staff also work closely with parents and keep detailed records of the actions taken and future steps needed to support vulnerable pupils and keep them safe.

Most parents who responded to the Parent View online survey agreed that their children feel safe in school. One pupil, reflecting the views of those around her, told me, 'We feel very safe here because everyone is friendly.' Other pupils said that they know how to stay safe and happily speak to staff if they have any worries.

Inspection findings

- Together, we agreed the key lines of enquiry to explore during my visit. First, I looked at what leaders and teachers have been doing to improve children's progress, especially boys', during their time in the Nursery and Reception classes.
- Your accurate assessments show that most children join the Nursery with skills that are lower than typical for their age. As a result of the good progress that children make in the Nursery, most start the Reception classes with skills and knowledge closer to those typical for their age. The majority of children who join Reception classes from other pre-school settings present lower levels of skill, especially in social and speaking skills. Even so, in response to sustained improvements in the early years provision, children make good progress in the Reception classes.
- Teachers present lots of stimulating learning experiences outdoors as well as in classrooms to ensure that boys are enthused in learning and achieve as well as

girls. During the inspection, all the children, including the boys, got on very well together and rapidly developed their communication and social skills. For example, children in the Nursery happily shared ideas about 'beautiful bubbles' in a water tray and about their 'table-top hospital'.

- Your staff sustain consistently good provision to ensure that children make at least good progress through the Nursery and Reception classes. You recognise that this needs to be sustained to bring the proportion of children achieving a good level of development to a level that matches the national average.
- My second line of enquiry was to examine the teaching and learning of phonics. This is because the proportion of pupils meeting expectations in the Year 1 phonics screening check has varied and not yet matched the national average.
- You have identified that some pupils, often those who entered school with low levels of understanding, lack confidence in pronouncing initial letter sounds correctly. You have tackled this issue with increasing success in recent years across early years and key stage 1 classes. For example, you have provided additional training in teaching phonics for teaching assistants as well as teachers. You also provide a wider range of activities and have doubled the opportunities for children to develop their understanding of the sounds that letters represent. This is evident in the way staff now use a variety of stimulating oral and practical experiences to interest the pupils and promote effective learning.
- Your actions ensure that pupils' performance in phonics continues to improve. You recognise, though, that this work has not been sustained long enough yet to ensure that outcomes in the phonics screening check match those found nationally.
- My third line of enquiry investigated leaders' efforts to secure good progress for pupils who have special educational needs (SEN) and/or disabilities.
- The school's focus on identifying the needs of these pupils is well informed and begins as soon as they enter the school. You and your SEN coordinator make sure that all staff, teachers as well as teaching assistants, receive appropriate training. This means that staff are well equipped to teach these pupils effectively. You and your leadership team also make good use of specialist external agencies to ensure that assessments of pupils' needs are accurate. This enables the teachers to plan and provide high-quality learning activities that match pupils' learning needs. It also means that all staff know how to adapt their guidance and sustain meaningful experiences for the pupils.
- My visits to early years and key stage 1 classes and checks of pupils' work in books showed that pupils who have SEN and/or disabilities learn well across a wide range of activities. Pupils behave well and interact positively with their classmates, especially, for example, during phonics sessions and when learning outdoors. These show that you are successfully boosting pupils' confidence and enjoyment of school and securing their good progress.
- My final line of enquiry investigated the steps leaders have taken to improve pupils' attendance. This is because there has been too much persistent absence since the previous inspection.

- You and your leadership team have taken effective action in recent years to improve pupils' punctuality. For example, the specific way that you and your staff welcome parents and their children at the start of each day has reduced lateness. You have raised attendance rates this academic year by supporting and more strongly challenging parents whose children are persistently absent. You continue to work well with outside agencies and parents to reduce the absence of vulnerable pupils. You acknowledge, though, that some pupils are still absent too often.

Next steps for the school

Leaders and those responsible for governance should ensure that:

- they sustain the focus on quickening children's progress through the early years classes so that the proportion of children achieving a good level of development at least matches the national average
- the school's approaches to phonics teaching are further embedded to bring the proportion of pupils achieving expected standards in the phonics screening check in Year 1 to a level that at least matches the national average
- attendance continues to improve, particularly for pupils who are frequently absent.

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

Yours sincerely

Alexander Baxter
Ofsted Inspector

Information about the inspection

During the inspection, I held meetings with you and with the other staff with leadership responsibilities. I met with members of the governing body and held a telephone discussion with a representative of the local authority. I visited classrooms with you and your deputy headteacher and together we scrutinised samples of pupils' work in books. I talked with individual pupils during visits to classrooms and with other pupils during the morning and lunchtime breaks. In addition, I examined a range of documents relating to safeguarding, pupils' attendance and progress and school self-evaluation and development. I took account of 28 responses to the Ofsted online Parent View survey and six additional parents' comments. I also took note of 26 responses to the staff questionnaire.