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Piccadilly Gate
Store Street
Manchester
M1 2WD

T 0300 123 4234
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Mr Michael Serridge
Headteacher
Harrow Way Community School
Harrow Way
Andover
Hampshire
SP10 3RH

Dear Mr Serridge

Short inspection of Harrow Way Community School

Following my visit to the school on 21 March 2017 with Peter Fry, Ofsted Inspector, 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 are determined to improve standards in your school and have created and shared clear plans to do so. You have skilfully managed difficulties caused by instability in staffing by appointing highly experienced specialist teachers and support staff. Teachers feel valued, trusted and very well supported. Senior leaders have assisted you in developing committed and hardworking staff who are recognised by parents as 'always going the extra mile and beyond' for pupils.

You have created a school that is calm and purposeful. Teachers and pupils are proud to be part of the school community. Parents told us that their children are happy at school and appreciate the ease of communication with staff. You are readily available to listen to the views of pupils, parents and staff. Parents report that they work in partnership with the school and problems are solved quickly and effectively. A parent echoed the views of others by describing 'a dedicated group of staff led by an exceptional headteacher'. Leaders have strengthened the reputation of the school in the community and consequently a larger cohort of pupils will transfer from primary schools in September 2017.

You keep a sharp focus on aspects of the school that need to further improve and have taken decisive actions to bring about improvements in several areas. You have critically reviewed the shortfalls that appeared in some of the pupils' progress measures in 2016. Senior and middle leaders are resolute in ensuring that all pupils

make good progress. Consequently, pupils who are disadvantaged and those who have special educational needs and/or disabilities are catching up with others. You have identified that there is more to do to improve the progress of boys, disadvantaged pupils and those who have special educational needs and/or disabilities. You have taken steps to bring their progress closer to that seen by other pupils nationally. You have also analysed the GCSE results in English and have made the right curriculum and staffing changes to be confident that pupils' outcomes improve.

You have addressed the weaknesses identified at the last inspection. You have made sure that homework is set regularly and pupils know it enables them to extend their learning beyond lessons. Pupils' literacy has developed across the curriculum and effective practice is shared in all subjects. Numeracy is not as consistently noticeable in pupils' work but there is good evidence in some subjects, for example their numeracy skills are developing well in science.

Safeguarding is effective.

You have developed a culture of safeguarding in the school that is recognised by staff, parents and most pupils. You diligently check that staff are suitable to be recruited to the school and that records are kept accurately and are up to date. Staff with additional responsibilities for safeguarding are trained well and frequently provide essential information to the rest of the staff. Leaders work closely with other agencies to ensure the best outcomes for pupils. Parents are positive about the care and support the pupils receive, especially where they need additional help.

Pupils gain useful knowledge from teachers and other professionals about how to keep themselves safe 'for now and for adult life'. Pupils know that poor behaviour will not be tolerated and the majority are confident that, should it occur, bullying will be dealt with effectively. Pupils have a clear understanding of prejudice and why it is not acceptable. Pupils' behaviour has improved so there is less need for leaders to issue fixed-term exclusions. Fixed-term exclusions have reduced and the frequency of pupils being excluded is now close to the national average.

Staff are aware of the connections between pupils' absence and safeguarding and follow up any concerns, if necessary, with the police and the local authority. Staff who focus on pupils' attendance work closely with the families of pupils who are frequently and/or persistently absent. Staff support parents of disadvantaged pupils and those who have special educational needs and/or disabilities to attend school more regularly. As a result, pupils' attendance has improved over the past year, although you know this needs to improve further. Leaders' use of additional funding is supporting families to improve attendance and reduce persistent absence so rates are at least equal to the national average.

Inspection findings

- During this inspection, as well as focusing on the quality of safeguarding and actions taken since the previous inspection, I pursued several lines of enquiry.

These were: the attendance of specific groups of pupils; the progress of pupils who have special educational needs and/or disabilities; the progress of disadvantaged pupils; the progress of pupils who enter the school with middle prior attainment; the outcomes for pupils in English and how effectively leaders evaluate and amend the curriculum.

- You have implemented a range of systems to record and monitor pupils' progress in all subjects. Teachers are provided with detailed information on every pupil and use it effectively to plan lessons with the right level of support and challenge. Consequently, teachers know their pupils individually and use a wide range of specific strategies to extend their learning. Teachers have high expectations of pupils to work hard and achieve the best that they can. Pupils appreciate that teachers make lessons enjoyable and plan work to challenge all pupils in the class.
- Senior and middle leaders have sharply focused additional funding to improve the progress of pupils who are disadvantaged and those who have special educational needs and/or disabilities. Leaders, following their research into how their own pupils learn, have used funding in a variety of innovative ways. Pupils are now making better progress and are catching up with their peers from similar starting points. You are tackling the differences between the progress made by other pupils nationally and your disadvantaged pupils, boys and those who have special educational needs and/or disabilities. You have made it clear to staff that diminishing these differences is a top priority for all of them.
- Pupils who join the school with low prior attainment in English and mathematics are supported well and make good progress. Some pupils start Year 7 in the transition group based in the 'flexible learning centre', where they feel very secure. Staff are trained well and are ambitious for pupils to join their classmates quickly. Pupils make rapid progress, particularly in reading and writing. Parents appreciate that this provides pupils with a very successful start to their school career.
- Leaders have analysed the 2016 results of the group of pupils who entered the school with middle prior attainment. Leaders have detailed knowledge of the individual pupils who did not achieve as well as others and this has led to them targeting pupils whose attendance was below others, tackling the underperformance of some boys and providing support beyond the classroom for pupils who are disadvantaged. All these pupils are now making better progress, especially in the younger years. You have accurately assessed that the outcomes for the current middle-attaining pupils, particularly boys and disadvantaged pupils, need to remain a focus for the next year.
- You have recruited new staff to join the school to teach and support the leadership of English, following a period of instability over the past two years. You have enabled and encouraged the collaboration between middle leaders to share good practice and are deploying teachers with high levels of expertise. Leaders' drive to strengthen literacy has provided pupils with additional skills in English that they are able to apply in other subjects.
- The English department leader has good knowledge of the requirements of the new GCSE qualifications and has adapted lessons to prepare pupils from an early

age. Consequently, pupils' progress is improving and is more secure in the younger years. Some pupils' work in Year 8 is already reaching a good standard but, overall, pupils' standards in English are not yet equivalent to those in other subjects. Governors are aware of the urgent need for English teachers' actions to have a positive impact on outcomes. They receive frequent reports from senior leaders to ensure that pupils' progress in English is consistently improving.

- You have effectively reviewed and revised the curriculum based on your firm principles to enable pupils to achieve their potential and to provide clear progression routes to post-16 opportunities. You have made changes to support more pupils to achieve the highest standards they can in GCSE examinations. You have removed courses that did not lead to valuable qualifications. You have considered options that will specifically motivate boys and are determined to continue with work-related opportunities for some pupils despite possible changes in the way they are funded.
- Your partnership with Andover College enables some pupils to follow a curriculum that has a work-related element. Pupils make good progress and gain qualifications that guarantee them places on higher-level post-16 courses. Pupils' attendance at college is good and it has a positive impact on their engagement with other subjects in school.
- Pupils are prepared well to choose their option subjects to study in Years 10 and 11. You have provided a broader curriculum in Year 9 to give pupils a 'taste' before confirming their choices for the next two years. Teachers, careers advice and activities such as 'work experience days' help pupils to understand how different courses will help them in the future.

Next steps for the school

Leaders and those responsible for governance should ensure that:

- pupils' achievement in English improves so that it matches the strong progress in other subjects
- disadvantaged pupils and boys continue to make rapid progress so their outcomes are equal to others
- attendance continues to improve for disadvantaged pupils and those who have special educational needs and/or disabilities.

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

Yours sincerely

Karen Roche
Ofsted Inspector

Information about the inspection

Inspectors visited the school for one day. They met with you, your leadership team, staff and governors. We scrutinised the school's website, policies on safeguarding and child protection, your evaluation of the school's strengths and areas for improvement, the development plan and other documents. With leaders, we visited all year groups to see teaching, learning and assessment across a range of subjects. There were formal meetings with pupils as well as discussions with them around the school. We also looked at pupils' work over time while they were in lessons, in particular in English, mathematics, science, geography, history and dance. Inspectors took account of the 122 parent responses to Parent View and their written comments, the responses to the 65 staff questionnaires and their comments, and 31 responses to the pupil questionnaire.