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Mr Mark Brumwell
Headteacher
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Dear Mr Brumwell

Short inspection of Sutton Bonington Primary School

Following my visit to the school on 12 January 2016 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 2011.

This school continues to be good.

The leadership team has maintained the good quality of education in the school since the last inspection. You demonstrate clear enthusiasm to provide a positive and inclusive learning community where pupils attain well, and you are determined to continue improvements until the school is outstanding. Parents are very enthusiastic about your leadership, the education the school provides and the values you instil in pupils. As one parent explained, 'it is a joy to entrust our children to the care of this brilliant school'. Parents I spoke with during my visit were unreservedly positive, telling me about the approachability of you and your staff, together with the inclusive nature of the school and the importance of educating 'the whole child'. It is unsurprising that the overwhelming majority of those who responded to Ofsted's online survey, Parent View, would recommend the school to other parents.

Staff are also extremely positive. Those who responded to the online survey confirm unanimously that the school has continued to improve since its last inspection and feel proud to work at Sutton Bonington. They are clear about what the school is trying to achieve and feel both motivated and respected. Your senior and subject leaders are confident in speaking about the many things that staff do well and you ensure that they support their colleagues in bringing further improvements about.

Governors are highly committed to the school and they ensure that they challenge you and other senior leaders effectively wherever needed. Those I met during my visit were keen to explain to me both why the school is good and how the current priorities for action are driving things forward. They ensure that the school teaches

fundamental British values to all pupils. Governors are particularly keen to see that pupils who are disadvantaged or whose circumstances make them vulnerable receive the support they deserve. However, governors need to ensure that, without identifying particular pupils, leaders report the impact of pupil premium spending on the school website so that parents can see where any gaps in achievement have closed, or are closing rapidly.

You and governors have tackled effectively those areas that inspectors identified for improvement at the last inspection. You and the governing body have ensured that the school improvement plan is now focused upon a manageable number of key issues for development. As a result, it is clear to see what actions have been taken and what staff are doing next. In lessons, pupils now have a good range of opportunities to research, investigate and solve problems. Books that I looked at during my visit also confirm that the work that pupils are given is appropriately challenging, including for the most able. Pupils I spoke with were keen to tell me that teachers give them good advice on what skills they need to work on next. Because of this, pupils are both clear about what they need to do and can explain this confidently to others. For example, in a lesson I visited in Year 2, pupils were inserting punctuation into sentences correctly. One pupil explained to me, 'I've put an exclamation mark in "Look out! The wolf is coming" because that's the bit where he's shouting.'

As a result of good teaching, pupils achieve well and are making good progress in all subjects. Information you provided regarding pupils' outcomes demonstrates that a very large majority are working at the levels expected for their age, with a considerable number working beyond this. Your latest assessments show that these proportions are increasing, and the good progress pupils are making is reflected in the many books that I looked at during my visit. Some time ago, you noticed that pupils were making less progress in writing, compared to mathematics and reading. Because of this, you ensured that teachers began to provide regular opportunities for pupils to practise their skills in extended writing. As a result, progress rates are now increasing, though they are not yet quite as high in writing as they are in other subjects. For this reason, you agree that staff need to ensure that they pay continued attention to pupils' writing until it becomes a strength of the school. Science work in the school is particularly impressive. Teachers give pupils excellent opportunities to investigate, think for themselves and draw accurate conclusions about their work. As a result, progress is rapid in this subject.

Safeguarding is effective.

You ensure that all staff understand that the safety of the school's pupils is of paramount importance. Staff are well trained, including in areas of recent national concern such as preventing radicalisation, where you have completed an action plan to ensure pupils are protected. As a result, staff know about the warning signs of a wide range of areas of potential abuse. They also know that they must report any concern they have, however minor, immediately. In a selection of files that I examined during my visit, it is clear that you take prompt and effective steps to refer to external agencies wherever needed. You have not only ensured that all

safeguarding arrangements are fit for purpose, but that you keep records both systematically and neatly. The designated governor for safeguarding meets with you termly to ensure that staff continue to protect pupils, and an overwhelming majority of parents who responded to Parent View express confidence that their child is safe at the school.

Pupils I spoke with during my visit were clear that Sutton Bonington is a safe and happy place to be. They were particularly keen to tell me that, if they have any concerns, they can approach staff for help. One pupil summed up the vigilance of adults there by saying, with a smile, 'they'd notice even if we *didn't* tell them!'

Inspection findings

- Senior leaders have continued to develop this good school. Your staff are a united and motivated team who take a pride in working at Sutton Bonington. As a result, classrooms have a calm, learning atmosphere where pupils pay attention, speak politely, complete their work well and have good attitudes to learning. Staff understand the school's priorities and have shared systems to ensure that pupils know what is expected of them and what they need to do next to improve their work. Pupils treat each other kindly and say that they enjoy the challenging work that they receive.
- The school's capacity for further improvement is clear, because leaders are not complacent. You have accurately assessed the school as good but are putting in place work to improve key aspects further. These priorities include ensuring that pupils develop a mastery of mathematics, as well as ensuring that skills in subjects such as science and technology are improved.
- Governors are committed and active in sustaining the school's success. They hold you and other senior leaders to account by asking challenging questions about pupil outcomes and other aspects of the school's provision. Though they are rightly proud of the school's success, they believe that Sutton Bonington, like all schools, must always work hard to improve still further. They are keen to ensure that all pupils make as much progress as possible in all subjects. In particular, they are insistent that support for any vulnerable or disadvantaged pupil must be of high quality so that he or she can achieve their potential. For this reason, they monitor spending on the pupil premium closely. They also ensure that pay rises are only awarded after teachers meet their targets on their individual performance.
- You and your staff ensure that the curriculum teaches pupils about fundamental British values. Staff give pupils many opportunities to learn about democracy, such as through the School Council and the Pupil Parliament, as well as being involved in the interview process for new teachers. Consistent application of the code of conduct means that pupils learn to behave well, and to understand why they must follow rules and laws. Pupils are encouraged to express their opinions,

and to listen and value the opinions, values and cultures of others. Staff teach pupils about cultures and faiths different to pupils' own, and the importance of respecting these. Consequently, pupils are well prepared for life in modern Britain and are positive about different groups of people in society.

- Subject leaders are confident in discussing their area of responsibility. They are helping staff to improve their teaching of the new National Curriculum. The subject leader for mathematics is assisting his colleagues effectively to ensure that pupils develop increasing mastery of this subject. For example, teachers are using 'super solvers' to ensure that pupils are becoming confident in investigating, problem solving and in applying what they already know to other challenges. The subject leader for English is ensuring that all staff teach writing in a consistent way, with pupils given appropriate time to practise their skills and to revisit any areas where they are not yet confident.
- Children entering the school in Reception have broadly typical ranges of skills, compared to other children of the same age. Pupils make good progress during their time in the school, with high proportions working at the level expected of them, and a considerable number working beyond this. However, leaders have set ambitious targets to improve these figures further by the end of this school year. The latest assessment information, which the school has checked to ensure accuracy, confirms that pupils are currently on track to achieve these. There has been a marked increase in the number of pupils achieving the levels expected for their age and, in particular, the number now working beyond them. This is true of all subjects, and confirmed in pupils' work seen during the inspection. However, leaders have noted that, currently, improvement is less brisk in writing. You agree that improvements in the teaching of writing need to be continued until progress is as good in this subject as it is for reading and mathematics.
- Pupils' work seen during the inspection confirms that they make particularly good progress in science. I looked at a selection of exercise books from different year groups in the school. These showed that teachers give very good opportunities to plan and undertake scientific work.
- While attendance in the previous school year was above average, a small number of pupils had unusually high absence rates. The inspector investigated the reasons for this during the inspection. Attendance rates for these pupils have now increased overall. It is clear that you work hard to ensure that all pupils attend regularly and punctually. You work effectively with families to support them, where absence is becoming a concern. Attendance remains above average.
- Parents who I spoke with during the visit were keen to impress upon me their admiration for the school. They believe that their children are making very good progress due to good teaching, and were particularly warm in their praise for the

way they can approach you or any of their staff if they have a problem. They feel that they receive helpful advice to support their children's learning, along with good information about how their children are making progress. These very positive views are reflected in responses to Parent View and in the school's own survey of parental opinion.

- Parents were also very quick to point out that their children are safe at Sutton Bonington. This is because you, staff and governors make it very clear that the safeguarding of pupils is your first concern. Staff training is thorough and up to date. Adults are vigilant and understand both the warning signs of potential abuse and the school's procedures to report any concerns they have.

Next steps for the school

Leaders and governors should ensure that:

- work to improve the progress of writing continues until pupils consistently make gains in this subject which are equal to those of other subjects
- governors ensure that, without identifying particular disadvantaged pupils, the school website shows the impact of the school's spending of the pupil premium in narrowing any gaps in achievement.

Yours sincerely

Roary Pownall
Her Majesty's Inspector

Information about the inspection

During the inspection, I met with you, representatives of the governing body and the subject leaders for English, mathematics and the early years. We visited all classes to observe teaching and learning. I observed pupils' behaviour in lessons and met with a group of them at breaktime. I met with parents at the end of the school day and considered the views of 74 parents posted on Ofsted's online survey, Parent View, alongside the school's most recent survey. I read a range of documents, including anonymised examples of teacher appraisal, information related to attendance and safeguarding records and policies.