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14 April 2016

Mrs Judy Grevett
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Dear Mrs Grevett

Short inspection of River Beach Primary School

Following my visit to the school on 10 March 2016 with Lea Hannam, 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 October 2012.

This school continues to be good.

Staff, parents and pupils are overwhelmingly positive about all aspects of the school. They are proud to belong to the school and enjoy being part of the River Beach community. Staff and parents commented that, although the school is large, you and the leaders manage this well so that it feels like a small school. All staff believe that the school provides a calm, orderly and aspirational place for pupils. The time since the amalgamation of three schools into River Beach has not been straightforward but you have built a cohesive staff, the vast majority of whom feel, and are, well supported by middle and senior leaders.

At the time of the previous inspection several key strengths were noted. These included the progress all pupils made across a range of subjects. There is a rising trend of improvement in pupils' reading, writing and mathematics skills, particularly in the early years and in Key Stage 1 where standards rose sharply last year. A strong focus on early reading means that pupils' early reading skills are broadly average. These outcomes show that younger pupils make good progress from their starting points. In-school assessments and the work in the books show that these improvements are continuing throughout the whole school. Since the previous inspection there has been a dip in the progress and attainment of the oldest pupils. Some of this can be explained by, and the evidence clearly shows, some inaccurate judgements being made at the end of Key Stage 1 prior to the amalgamation. This had a negative effect on the progress information and the published data makes it look as if a large group of pupils made less progress than was actually the case. Nonetheless, you realised that some strategies were not working as well as they should. You have made improvements, particularly in the teaching of reading and

mathematics, and the evidence in lessons, books and assessment information shows that these improvements are working. Progress is increasingly rapid and attainment is rising.

The previous inspection identified areas for improvement. These included increasing pupils' progress in writing and mathematics by ensuring that their writing is more complex and sustained, and making mathematics more lively, motivating and practical. There is good evidence in the books and on display to show that pupils respond well to the many interesting, relevant opportunities to write for different purposes. In mathematics, pupils are given good opportunities and resources to develop their mathematics skills and understanding. Another area for improvement was to increase the usefulness of feedback and pupils' involvement in their learning. This has also been addressed. Adults give pupils useful information about their learning and the pupils are very much involved in assessing their own learning and identifying the next steps. The pupils are proud of their achievements both in lessons and in the contribution they make to the wider life of the school.

The cohesion, rigour and drive of the leadership team were commended at the previous inspection and leadership continues to be strong. In addition to the senior leaders, the mathematics and English teams are also knowledgeable and influential. The school's self-evaluation is accurate and honest in highlighting weaknesses. There are clear links between self-evaluation and actions taken to bring about improvements. In particular, there is a strong emphasis on raising the achievement of most-able and disadvantaged pupils, particularly in mathematics and reading. You have made difficult decisions and made changes, which were not all welcomed at the time. Nonetheless, staff are all clear about the overall goals and about their roles in bringing about further improvements.

Safeguarding is effective.

Pupils' behaviour and safety were commended at the time of the last inspection and continue to be strong. The school's motto, 'Every child, every chance, every day' is very evident in your approach to safeguarding. All of the parents and staff who responded to the surveys say that pupils are safe and happy in school. Policies and procedures are comprehensive and up to date. Rigorous checks and training are carried out to make sure that all staff, trainee teachers and volunteers are suitable to work with children and know the school's procedures. Seven members of staff are trained as safeguarding leaders and all other staff are updated regularly on safeguarding issues. Your pastoral leader makes sure that all potentially vulnerable pupils are carefully tracked. You take practical steps to support staff, pupils and parents in using the internet safely. There is full-time medical support and many staff are trained in aspects of first aid so that cover on visits and all school events is comprehensive. Attendance is improving and, so far this year, is just above average with a pleasing reduction in the number of pupils who regularly take time off school. Disadvantaged pupils and those with education, health and care plans have attended less well than others in the past but this gap is closing. Relationships throughout the school are very positive and pupils are polite, friendly and keen to learn.

Inspection findings

- The changes you and the staff have introduced to the teaching of reading are making a real difference. As well as increasing pupils' pleasure in reading, there is a strong focus on exploring texts to make deductions and infer meaning. For example, Year 3 pupils explored how they could work out the author's meaning from the text. The adults use thoughtful questions to probe pupils' understanding and extend their thinking. Occasionally, they do not give the children the chance to read, think and explain before jumping in and helping them out.
- There are many opportunities for pupils to read for a purpose and for pleasure. Pupils choose to read and to share books with adults at lunchtime. Many parents, including lots of fathers, come into school to listen to their children read at the start of day. Attractive book areas in all classes have been developed with input from pupils and the library is well used. You are increasing pupils' access to their own books and are supporting them to acquire their own personal book collection.
- You have introduced a reading programme which is motivating pupils to read more and to come in early and stay late to complete quizzes. They wear their medals and badges with pride. The staff also join in with this and you are also proud of your many badges. In the first six weeks of the programme, Year 6 pupils made seven months' progress.
- In the same amount of time, disadvantaged pupils made five months' progress. You recognise this gap and are working hard to increase this group's involvement. In the past, gaps between disadvantaged pupils and others narrowed as they moved through the school. However, you are concerned that the pace of progress is still not as rapid for this group as for others, particularly for most-able disadvantaged pupils. This is a key priority for the school and all staff are very focused on ensuring that this group get the support and challenge required to ensure they do as well as possible.
- There is a wide range of examples of writing for different purposes and a strong focus on pupils editing and improving their writing. The improvement over time in the quality of their writing is evident in their books and on display. Many of the Year 2 pupils have lovely joined-up writing and their books show rapid improvement in basic skills, such as sentence construction and punctuation. The pupils' care and pride is evident in the presentation of their work.
- In mathematics, there is consistency of planning, pace and expectations across the classes in the same year groups. Pupils' books show high levels of challenge. Pupils are supported to review the success of their own learning and can identify, and write, their next steps. Year 6 pupils were fully engaged in discovering the measurement of unknown angles, using what they know about the properties of triangles, opposite angles and 180 and 360 degree turns.
- The focus on ensuring the most-able pupils achieve as well as possible is evident throughout the school. Activities are planned with different levels of challenge ranging from mild, chilli, hot and devil. Year 4 pupils worked well together on perimeters of shapes using reasoning, explaining their thinking

and listening carefully to each other. An additional 'devil' challenge extended the learning of the most-able for example, by using decimals in the context of perimeter. A Year 1 pupil stated proudly that he was 'hot'. Most-able pupils in Year 1 used a 200 number square and were able to explain their thinking, showing a good depth of understanding. The books show that pupils have a secure understanding of written methods.

- There is good use of practical resources. However, the tablets in early years had not been prepared well enough so that, although the children enjoyed using them, the chosen mathematical and reading games were too difficult for them.
- Pupils have a strong voice and influence the direction of the school. For example, lunchtimes were reorganised as a result of suggestions from the school council so that pupils sit with their friends at tables with tablecloths. They also introduced the star points rewards scheme and suggested quiet spaces at lunchtime such as the African garden. Recently, pupils nominated heroes such as Tim Peake, the British astronaut, the local community police officer and a child dealing with a serious illness. They organised an event to reward them. Pupils also organised activities and raised over £10,000 to buy a hearing dog.
- The school promotes strong values and all pupils engage with this well. The pupils have developed concrete examples of how modern British values work in school. For example, the rule of law is explained as 'we help develop fair rules for our class and the school'. Across the school in all lessons, pupils are fully involved and there is a calm sense of purpose. The books show that pupils are expected to complete a reasonable amount of work in each lesson. They are increasingly confident learners who take pride in their work.

Next steps for the school

Leaders and those responsible for governance should ensure that:

- there is consistently high-quality teaching and learning across the school so that pupils, particularly older, most-able and disadvantaged pupils, make increasingly rapid progress and achievement improves.

I am copying this letter to the chair of the local governing body, the chief executive of Schoolworks Multi-Academy Trust, the regional schools commissioner and the director of children's services for West Sussex County Council. This letter will be published on the Ofsted website.

Yours sincerely

Sheena MacDonald
Her Majesty's Inspector

Information about the inspection

We met with you, the deputy headteacher, the English and mathematics leadership teams, the inclusion manager (pastoral) and the business manager. I also met the chief executive officer and the director of teaching and learning from Schoolsworks, the multi-academy trust, and the chair of the local governing body. We visited most of the classes during the day to observe the quality of teaching and learning, particularly in reading and mathematics. We also looked at samples of books, including some from disadvantaged pupils. I took account of 66 staff questionnaires and 69 responses to the online survey Parent View. We spoke to a number of parents at the start of the school day. I had lunch with pupils and my colleague observed the pupils in the playground at lunchtime. We looked at a range of the school's documentation, including information about your monitoring of teaching and learning, pupils' achievement, safeguarding checks, policies and procedures. We also looked at, and discussed with you, the evaluation of the school's effectiveness and the current improvement plans.