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13 July 2016

Mr Richard Parratt  
Headteacher  
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Dear Mr Parratt

### **Short inspection of Saxon Wood School**

Following my visit to the school on 23 June 2016 with Christine Bulmer, 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 November 2012.

#### **This school continues to be good.**

With the support of the deputy headteacher you have maintained the good quality of education in the school since the last inspection. Your determined, calm and warm leadership ensures that pupils and their families benefit from a close family ethos at this very small school. All staff know the pupils and their families very well. Consequently, families feel, and are, very well supported and the needs of their children are met well.

Since the last inspection, there have been considerable changes to the teaching team. Nevertheless, you have ensured that pupils continue to benefit from provision that is tailored to their individual needs. This has been possible because of the effective deployment of the deputy headteacher, who complements your skills very well. Together, you work effectively with teachers. This helps to improve and develop their practice and enhances their ability to meet the specific needs of their pupils.

The quality of teaching is good. There are excellent relationships between teachers, teaching assistants and pupils. Pupils do their best because they recognise when the adults around them care about the progress they make. Where teaching is at its best, teachers know their pupils as learners first. They recognise that any disability is a barrier to be overcome. They ensure that tasks are shaped to allow children to meet the learning objectives of the lesson.

Pupils speak highly of their experiences at the school and are proud to be members of their 'family school'. They rightly believe they are very well cared for because their individual needs are considered in all aspects of the school's work. You and the deputy headteacher undertake a range of useful activities to find out what pupils think and how well they are learning. You rightly focus on the progress that pupils are making towards the targets in their individual education plans. You use this information to make considered changes to provision, when necessary. However, you could be better at looking at the difference your actions make to pupils' outcomes.

At the last inspection, leaders and managers were asked to ensure that staff check pupils' small steps in learning during lessons, to develop the role of support assistants to promote independence and to improve how whole-school responsibilities are shared among staff. Leaders have tackled these areas effectively, so that:

- there is better consistency in the quality of teaching and learning
- teachers deploy support staff well, make better use of assessment and work effectively together to improve pupils' independence
- teachers are given clear areas of responsibility that utilise their skills and experience well.

### **Safeguarding is effective.**

You have ensured that safeguarding arrangements are very effective. This is because you rightly give it the highest priority. You have ensured that school policies are underpinned by the latest Department for Education guidance, and are followed appropriately by staff. Staff receive useful and relevant training, for example to ensure that all are clear about what to do if they are concerned about the welfare of a pupil.

Leaders work effectively with other agencies to ensure that pupils are kept safe, and have been tenacious in following up concerns when necessary. Leaders ensure that detailed records are kept about children for whom they might have concerns. This reflects the effective implementation of school policies. Appropriate checks are made on staff when they are appointed. There are particularly close working relationships with health colleagues because the associate practitioner works closely with leaders, as she is based at the school. This helps to ensure that pupils are well cared for in relation to their physical needs, which is the primary area that the school caters for.

Pupils report that they thoroughly enjoy school. They behave exceptionally well and contribute fully to the family ethos that they enjoy. They learn how to keep themselves safe in a range of ways. For example, they know about the dangers of fire, the risks of talking to people they do not know and what they should and should not do when using the internet.

The appointed safeguarding governor usefully meets regularly with you. For example, you have completed an annual review of safeguarding arrangements

together, which is used precisely to plan further improvements.

## **Inspection findings**

- Leadership and management are effective. Leaders have successfully reversed a decline in effectiveness following a large number of changes to teaching staff in this very small school. Leaders have a clear vision of what they want to achieve, because they know individual children and their families very well. They work tirelessly to ensure that provision is suited to each individual's needs.
- The headteacher and deputy headteacher work closely with individual staff on a regular basis. This helps to ensure that the management of staff performance is effective. Leaders rightly identify where practice is stronger and where there is more work to be done. Weaker performance is challenged rigorously. Teachers appreciate the opportunities they are given to make progress towards their personal targets, by visiting outstanding special schools, for example.
- Governors are effective. This is particularly evident in the focused visits they make to the school around the areas for improvement in the school's development plan. Governors are very knowledgeable about special educational needs. For example, they are clear about what is expected as a result of the new code of practice. Governors are, rightly, pupil-focused and base their vision and work around a desire to improve outcomes. They have a clear influence on how the school is led and managed and ensure that actions are carried out.
- The school's range of subjects and experiences (the curriculum) has been carefully designed with the pupils' needs in mind. Consequently, the experiences and opportunities pupils receive help them to learn to love their time at school and to learn well. Pupils are given a number of opportunities to participate and contribute to their local and national communities. They learn to value diversity and believe rightly that everyone has their own set of strengths and weaknesses. This helps them to be well-prepared for their next stage of education and for life in modern Britain.
- The quality of teaching, learning and assessment is good. Teachers ensure that lessons are planned to address the specific targets from pupils' individual education plans. For example, in a lesson in Years 2 and 3, pupils were retelling the story of 'The gingerbread man'. The teacher successfully removed barriers so that all pupils could access the activity, rather than changing the high expectations for all of the pupils. One pupil was using a computer to tell the story, others were verbally retelling the story while their teacher scribed and others organised pictures into sequences and used words and signs to share the key points.
- Other adults, such as teaching assistants, make a useful contribution to lessons. They are skilled and make good use of time to help pupils develop skills of independence. Other adults make a marked contribution to the community at the school.
- Leaders have identified appropriately where there is still some work to do to

ensure the same level of consistency in learning. Where this is the case, lessons are sometimes not focused enough on pupils' learning, because teachers have thought too much about what the adults in the classroom are doing. Effective action has already been taken to improve this and plans for building on this are focused rightly on improving pupils' outcomes.

- The quality of the early years mirrors that of the school. Where practice is stronger, a multi-sensory approach ensures that children are actively engaged, regardless of their individual need. The learning environment is effectively planned to support children's development in all areas of the foundation stage curriculum. By the time they have finished their Reception Year, children have made strong progress in their communication skills and are well-prepared to access the next stage of their education.
- Pupils' outcomes are good. All pupils come to the school working at levels that are lower than you would expect for their age. Consequently, they all have a statement of educational needs or an education, health and care plan. In 2015, the proportion of pupils who made expected or better than expected progress, relative to their starting points, was high and had improved from the previous two years. This is because pupils make good progress towards their individual targets in lessons and over time. Where teaching is strongest, pupils make the most progress. Pupils need to make the same rapid and sustained progress across the school for outcomes to be outstanding.
- Leaders have made effective use of the support they have been given by advisers from the local authority. This support has been key to re-establishing the good quality of education at the school, following a period of difficult transition caused by a high number of changes to the teaching team. For example, they have helped ensure that leaders are more focused in their evaluations of the school. However, leaders could still be clearer about the difference their actions make in improving pupils' outcomes.

### **Next steps for the school**

Leaders and those responsible for governance should ensure that:

- teaching continues to improve until it is consistently focused on learning
- they improve how they analyse the impact of their work by looking at what difference they make to pupils' outcomes.

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

Yours sincerely

Matthew Barnes  
**Her Majesty's Inspector**

## **Information about the inspection**

Inspectors met with you, the deputy headteacher, some middle leaders, a group of governors including the chair of the governing body, a representative from Hampshire local authority and a group of pupils. They visited five lessons, all but one accompanied by a member of the leadership team, to observe teaching and to talk to pupils about what they were learning. Inspectors scrutinised a selection of pupils' work. They considered the responses of parents to a recent school survey, because there were too few responses to Ofsted's online questionnaire (Parent View). They analysed a range of documentation, including reports provided by the local authority, the school's self-evaluation, the improvement plan, minutes and reports of the governing body and safeguarding checks as well as policies and procedures.