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Piccadilly Gate
Store Street
Manchester
M1 2WD

T 0300 123 4234
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Mr Scott Opstad
Headteacher
Paddock Wood Primary School
Old Kent Road
Paddock Wood
Tonbridge
Kent
TN12 6JE

Dear Mr Opstad

Short inspection of Paddock Wood Primary School

Following my visit to the school on 12 July 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 November 2011.

This school continues to be good.

The school did not maintain its good performance following the previous inspection. There was a lack of cohesion and sense of direction. Pupils did not make good progress, particularly in key stage 2. Assessment was inaccurate and activities not pitched correctly to really move the learning on quickly enough. This was an area for improvement identified at the previous inspection which was not addressed immediately.

Since your arrival, the school has turned around and is now providing a good quality of education. Your mantras of 'keep it clear and simple' for adults and 'quality, quantity and perseverance' for pupils have been taken to heart by all, and the quality of teaching and learning have improved. As a result, pupils' achievement across all subjects has risen rapidly over the past two years. The improvements in their knowledge and skills have been building through the school and are only now bearing fruit in the outcomes at the end of Year 6. Pupils' reading and writing skills have risen rapidly. Although their mathematics skills are rising too, the pace is not as rapid and this is rightly a focus for further improvement.

The school turnaround has involved changes at a deep level rather than quick fixes. Despite some difficult decisions having to be made, changes have been achieved with sensitivity. An area for improvement identified at the previous inspection was to establish greater consistency in the quality and impact of teaching. You have

addressed this very effectively so that now staff work together and there are high levels of consistency and coherence. The staff survey shows overwhelming support for leaders. Goals are shared, staff feel supported and highly motivated. All of the staff enjoy and are proud to be part of the school. Some changes have happened fairly recently and have affected the quality of provision in the early years. You are aware of this and are strengthening leadership in this area of the school in order to move it forward in harmony with the rest of the school.

You, other leaders and staff have used the changes in assessment and increasing demands of the curriculum to heighten teachers' understanding of what pupils know, can do and need to do next. The curriculum has been completely overhauled and pupils enjoy learning in depth across many different subjects. Another aspect identified for improvement at the previous inspection was to increase the challenge for the most able and provide opportunities for independent learning. Teachers have raised their expectations and the achievement of all pupils has risen, including groups such as the most able, disadvantaged pupils, and pupils who have special educational needs and/or disabilities. You know that the pupils have the potential to achieve even more and are keen to develop their positive attitudes to learning further by ensuring that they play a greater part in making decisions about their learning and challenging themselves more.

Safeguarding is effective.

All of the staff, parents and pupils who responded to the various surveys believe that the school is a safe and happy place where pupils are well looked after. This is a strength, which has been maintained and improved further since the previous inspection. Pupils enjoy coming to school and attendance is above average. Almost all parents, pupils and all staff believe that behaviour is well managed, pupils behave well and that bullying is rare. Pupils say that when poor behaviour occurs an adult deals with it effectively. No inappropriate behaviour was seen during the visit. Relationships were positive and purposeful throughout the school and pupils were exceptionally courteous.

Keeping pupils safe and looking after them well, has a very high priority. There are weekly meetings of the safeguarding team to review any concerns and check on any follow up action when necessary. Systems to record concerns and to liaise with outside agencies are effective. All relevant checks are carried out to make sure that the adults in school are suitable to work with children. Governors carry out their responsibilities through regular safeguarding checks and health and safety visits. Training is regular for staff and governors and there is an appropriate emphasis on aspects such as online safety, although greater emphasis could be given to ensuring that all staff and governors have been briefed on the most recent guidance such as the dangers of extremism.

Inspection findings

- The local authority and the governors are confident and convincing that your arrival has brought about much needed change. Governors understand the journey the school has been on over the past few years. They carry out their

roles and responsibilities well. Their monitoring and evaluation role would be enhanced further, if the targets in the improvement plan were even sharper.

- Attainment is rising across the school. This year a much higher than average proportion of pupils achieved the expected level of knowledge and skills for their age. There has also been a rise in the proportion of Year 1 pupils achieving the expected standard in the phonics (letters and the sounds that they make) screening check. Pupils in Year 2 continue to achieve well and, throughout the school, there are improvements across every year group.
- In-school assessment information shows that the rising trend in attainment and progress has accelerated over the past two years. Achievement in reading and writing are particularly strong. These improvements have taken time to embed and the positive impact is now noticeable in all year groups, including Year 6.
- Although there has been a rise in achievement in the early years, there is scope for further improvements in teaching and learning to improve the quality of provision and increase the proportion achieving better than expected progress.
- The rapid trend of improvement is confirmed by work seen in the pupils' books. In particular, writing in books and on display shows rapid progress over the year, with some very high-quality examples in all age groups. Older pupils demonstrate the ability to write extensively, sustaining style and complexity, for example in their 'Highwayman' poems. Other poems, such as the evocative ones about owls, show an ability to use imagery to express complex ideas and emotions. There are many good examples of high-quality writing for different purposes, for example to explain different ideas such as in the lead-up to the European Union referendum.
- The pupils' mathematics books show that pupils are covering an appropriate range of mathematics content and the work is well presented. There is good evidence of increasing fluency in numeracy in the books of pupils who benefited from sharply focused mathematics interventions. There are opportunities for pupils to tackle real-life, challenging activities, for example pupils in Year 3 were designing a garden and costing their designs. The books in all subjects also show precise feedback used by pupils to improve specific aspects of their work. Nonetheless, achievement in mathematics remains weaker than in other subjects and this is a focus for further improvement, with an increased emphasis on everyday opportunities for problem solving and reasoning.
- In the past, disadvantaged pupils have achieved less well than other pupils. The local authority carried out a review of the additional government pupil premium spending. The review showed that the school was using the funds appropriately and that the actions taken were resulting in real and rapid improvements for disadvantaged pupils. This confirmed both by the school's assessment information and the work in the pupils' books. There has been a concerted effort to address this weakness and to identify and target underachieving groups. The school has provided sharply focused support both in class and in small groups to close gaps. Actions such as ensuring that all pupils read every day as well as interventions to address reading and mathematics weaknesses are resulting in rapid improvements. This year the

gaps have almost closed, with disadvantaged pupils achieving as well as, and sometimes better than, other pupils.

- The specialist teachers are passionate about their subjects and transfer that passion to pupils and colleagues. As a result, pupils achieve well in subjects such as music and French. The 'groaning' sports trophy cabinet is testament to achievements in physical education. So are the pupils' writing and comments about learning to rock climb and ski.
- Pupils appreciate the opportunities to shine in different subjects and out-of-school activities. School dinners are currently being enhanced by the addition of raspberries produced by the gardening club. There is a lovely buzz in all the classrooms and some really impressive and beautifully presented work at length and in depth across different subjects, including some high-quality art and geography being produced at the moment. For example, Year 4 pupils explained the pros and cons of building on the Florida everglades. They showed a good understanding of competing demands of rising population and the impact on the flora and fauna of this landscape. This high-quality and in-depth learning is evident in the pupils' topic books and suggests that they are developing a real thirst for learning. There is scope to build on these positive attitudes by giving pupils more opportunities to make decisions about their learning.

Next steps for the school

Leaders and those responsible for governance should ensure that:

- the quality of teaching continues to improve and the rate of pupils' progress accelerates, particularly in mathematics
- the quality of leadership and provision in the early years improves
- pupils have more opportunities to make choices, use their initiative and challenge themselves even further.

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

Yours sincerely

Sheena MacDonald
Her Majesty's Inspector

Information about the inspection

I met with you, senior leaders, including members of the safeguarding team, three governors and an improvement advisor from the local authority. You and I visited most of the classes during the day to observe the quality of teaching and learning and look at the pupils' books. I took account of 17 staff questionnaires, 117

responses to the Ofsted online survey Parent View and 48 responses to the pupil questionnaire. I also looked at a recent school survey of parents' views. I had lunch with pupils including the head girl and boy. I looked at a range of the school's documentation, including information about pupils' achievement, attendance, safeguarding checks, policies and procedures. I also looked at, and discussed with you, the evaluation of the school's effectiveness and the current improvement plan.