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Mrs Maddie Southern  
Headteacher  
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Dear Mrs Southern

### **Short inspection of Hove Junior School**

Following my visit to the school on 12 July 2016 with Catherine Old, Her Majesty's 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 2011.

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

School leaders have maintained the good quality of education in the school since the last inspection. Since taking up your position as substantive headteacher in February this year, you have quickly identified priorities for improving the school and are moving things forward. Establishing a stable senior leadership team across both sites of the school has been very important, as has ensuring the correct structure for the school's middle leadership team, particularly in the way year groups are led and managed.

Your working partnership with the governing body is strong. The support and challenge governors have offered you has been extremely prudent and pitched sensibly since your appointment. This is particularly important in light of the extra challenge created by the ongoing rapid expansion of the school. Most importantly, senior leaders and governors have ensured that standards have not slipped during a period of transition and change in the school's leadership team.

Classrooms are productive places. Pupils enjoy the opportunities they have to learn. They respond well to the 'whole-school learning journey' approach to the curriculum. Inspectors were able to visit the majority of classes during the inspection, although some of the Year 3 and 4 classes were off-site enjoying their annual sports day. Expectations were high. Pupils understood what they were learning and why, and were eager to tackle the tasks in hand. Typically, the level of challenge seen was good, although you and other leaders know there are inconsistencies in the progress of pupils across year groups and within different

subjects. Older pupils in particular showed a good level of engagement in the way they worked, talking enthusiastically about tackling the 'extra-challenge' tasks available to them. Year 6 pupils were very motivated to first discuss and then write about their recent transition visits to secondary schools. Their excitement was clear to see in the 'babble-gaggle' session, where they shared their experiences with each other and made the crucial choice of writing either a formal or informal letter, to put on record their hopes and fears as they move on to secondary education.

Pupils feel safe in school. They told inspectors staff care for them, although they feel there are still instances of bullying, despite the work of staff and the school council to educate pupils and eradicate this aspect from day-to-day life.

During the inspection behaviour was good, especially in classrooms, where pupils were totally engaged with their learning. A small minority of parents who used the online Ofsted questionnaire, Parent View, expressed concern about behaviour. However, the very large majority agreed that staff ensure that pupils are well behaved.

At the time of the last inspection, inspectors recognised the many strengths of the school, including pupils' attainment in English and mathematics being above that of similar schools, high rates of attendance, and leaders' rigorous procedures for evaluating the school's effectiveness. They also identified a need to ensure that the quality of teaching continued to improve by ensuring that teachers matched work more closely to pupils' needs, as well as improving the school's information and communication technology (ICT) provision. Leaders have addressed these matters effectively so that:

- teachers plan and deliver engaging lessons and consistently provide appropriate levels of challenge for pupils, including for the most able
- the use of ICT is now firmly established as a tool to support learning.

Since the last inspection, school leaders have continued the important process of self-evaluation in order to identify the most important priorities to improve the school. During my visit, you were able to explain the school's strengths, as well as the areas that need to be developed. These include ensuring that the quality of teaching, learning and assessment continues to improve so that the outcomes of pupils are more consistent across year groups and in different subjects. We also agreed that the role of subject leaders should be developed further, and that the school's new system to monitor the progress and achievements of pupils should be further refined so that it becomes a more effective tool for school improvement.

### **Safeguarding is effective.**

School leaders ensure that the safety of children is a top priority. Procedures and systems are robust. The governing body takes its statutory duties seriously and monitors arrangements to keep children safe very well. Day-to-day routines are given high importance. Children are taught how to stay safe when using the internet or social media. Staff are trained in safeguarding at levels appropriate to their responsibilities and are up to date with the latest national priorities regarding the different risks to children.

During a formal discussion, pupils told the inspector that they feel the school is a safe place, although more work needs to be done to ensure pupils are always kind to each other. All of the parents I talked to during my visit told me that they feel their children are safe at school.

### **Inspection findings**

- You lead the school well, promptly confirming the school's strengths and identifying the areas that require further development. Because of this, self-evaluation is thorough and improvement planning focuses on the right priorities.
- Your model of distributive leadership is evolving and beginning to have a positive impact on improving outcomes for pupils. Senior leaders are increasingly effective and share your drive to improve the school.
- Middle leaders are having a growing impact on improving the quality of teaching, learning and assessment. Recent changes to the way year groups are led are well thought through. However, the role of subject leaders requires further refinement to establish clearer lines of accountability.
- Governors know the school very well and offer you good support in making the changes required to improve the school. They are aware that their role is strategic in nature and are very clear that their focus should be on holding leaders to account for progress and improvement, not on the day-to-day running of the school.
- The new system to track pupil progress and attainment is developing well, but needs further refinement in order for leaders and governors to be fully effective in identifying gaps in provision and monitoring the progress towards eradicating them.
- Pupils' attainment in reading, writing and mathematics has been above national averages in the last three years, significantly so for reading and writing. Evidence gathered during classroom visits by inspectors and the school's provisional national test and assessment results indicate that pupil attainment continues to be very strong.
- Most pupils make good or better progress as they move through the school, although there are variations across different year groups and in different subjects. School leaders track progress well and intervene to improve the quality of teaching, learning and assessment when required.
- Last year, pupils' progress in mathematics was not as strong as that seen in reading and writing. Because of the actions taken by leaders, progress in mathematics is improving, especially for most-able pupils who are capable of achieving at higher levels.
- Leaders, including governors, have identified rightly that improving outcomes for disadvantaged pupils is a high priority. Because of this, pupils from disadvantaged backgrounds are making better progress than seen in the past and the gap in attainment between these pupils and others is closing.
- Provision for pupils with special educational needs and disabilities is good and improving. Recent restructuring of leadership roles, as well as sharing resources and improved communication with local infant schools, are having a positive impact. Parents were particularly positive about this aspect of the school's work.

- Pupils behave well and show good attitudes to learning. Staff deal well with pupils who have complex needs. Attendance rates are very good and better than national averages. The school monitors absence well and works hard to support individual pupils whose attendance is a concern.
- The involvement of the local authority has been 'light touch' in nature, due to the strengths of the school. However, communication and partnerships are strong and leaders and governors have been afforded good support and advice in the recent past.
- Most parents are very supportive of the school. The very large majority who spoke to inspectors or responded to the online parent questionnaire were very positive about the quality of education that the school offers.

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

Leaders and those responsible for governance should ensure that:

- the quality of teaching and learning continues to improve so that the progress of pupils is consistently good or better across all year groups and in all subjects
- the roles of subject leaders, especially for English and mathematics, are more clearly defined, ensuring clear lines of responsibility and accountability
- the new system for tracking pupil progress is further refined to ensure it becomes a fully effective tool for leaders and governors to drive improvement.

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

Yours sincerely

Clive Close

**Her Majesty's Inspector**

### **Information about the inspection**

Inspectors met with you and other senior leaders, middle leaders, pupils, a representative of the local authority, and the chair of the governing body, accompanied by two other governors. Inspectors were accompanied by senior leaders during classroom visits on both sites of the school, talking to pupils about their learning and looking at the quality of their work. Inspectors observed pupils' behaviour in and around the school. They also spoke to parents at the beginning of the day, took into account the 84 responses to Ofsted's online questionnaire, Parent View, and the 82 'free text' responses submitted by parents. Inspectors analysed a wide range of documentation, including information about the progress and achievements of pupils, your own self-evaluation, the school improvement plan and records of visits by the local authority. The safeguarding policy, single central record and other records and procedures to keep pupils safe were also scrutinised.