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Mr Andrew Jervis
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Dear Mr Jervis

Short inspection of Crowhurst CofE Primary School

Following my visit to the school on 10 January 2017, 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 June 2013.

This school continues to be good.

Among your staff you have fostered and embedded a spirit of togetherness and united determination to provide high-quality education for the pupils in your care. Governors, too, are immersed in the school's ethos and share your vision of high ambition for each pupil. Governors are extremely supportive and challenge school leaders about the impact of their work on school development. Middle leaders flourish because you have nurtured their development into strong leaders, focused on learning, and they act as role models to teachers. Pupils' academic achievement and personal growth are central to your school ethos and, because of this, pupils feel valued; they develop into mature, well-rounded individuals who are well prepared for their future lives. Pupils aspire highly and believe in their own potential.

Since the last inspection, you have achieved your goal to place your school at the very heart of the local community. You value the opportunities you have had to work in partnership with other schools to share good practice and to elevate your school's effectiveness at the same time. Consequently, the leadership team has maintained the good quality of education in the school since the last inspection. Parents are overwhelmingly positive about the school and proud that their children attend Crowhurst. A parent summed up their views by saying, 'The school works hard to understand what makes each child tick and to find their way to shine, be it academically, musically, in performance, or in their friendships and responsibilities.'

Most pupils enter the school with knowledge, skills and understanding that are broadly typical for children of their age. By the time they leave, their achievement is typically higher than the national average. This school is characteristically a high-performing school where more pupils have reached the expected standard in reading, writing and mathematics than the national average, and this year was no exception. This is noteworthy, given the increased expectations of the new primary curriculum.

You have developed a system for tracking pupils' progress and achievement that teachers use to plan learning that is mostly well matched to the needs of all pupils. You are developing the use of the information available to you about pupils' performance to identify groups of pupils who are not doing quite as well as others. This information is also informing the school's improvement planning and its strategic direction. You are resolute in your determination to enable every pupil to achieve their best.

You and your staff have worked creditably to meet the recommendations from the previous inspection. Together, you have continued to focus on raising the quality of teaching, especially in mathematics. Teaching staff personalise learning well to pupils' specific needs and, because of this, most pupils are consistently challenged to achieve their best. Pupils enthusiastically participate in their lessons. They are inquisitive and eager to share their achievements. Pupils have superb attitudes towards each other and are keen to improve their work and attain highly.

You have worked hard to increase the proportion of pupils who attend school every day and have communicated the importance of good attendance to parents. Sometimes, pupils are unable to attend as often as they would like to through no fault of their own. You have supported pupils and their families when required to help them attend school more regularly. This year, there are positive indications that attendance is improving towards the national average for primary schools.

Safeguarding is effective.

You and your staff are committed to making certain that safeguarding pupils from harm is central to everything that you do. Positive relationships between staff and pupils and between pupils underpin the highly effective, nurturing ethos that cloaks pupils with care. This is a cohesive school community where adults and pupils respect each other. Pupils' manners and their empathy and compassion for others are of the highest order. Pupils feel valued and are confident that any concerns they might have will be swiftly addressed. They trust staff to help and support them.

You have ensured that pupils know how to keep themselves safe within society, especially when they are using the internet. Parents' accolade for the calm atmosphere and the care that the school affords for their children is commendable. As one parent wrote, 'The school is like a family where everyone belongs.'

School leaders, including governors, have ensured that all safeguarding

arrangements are fit for purpose and that records are detailed and of high quality. Leaders make sure that thorough checks are carried out on staff and other adults when they work or volunteer at the school. Staff receive training that is pertinent to their roles and demonstrate vigilance and responsiveness to any concerns that may arise.

Inspection findings

- Children receive a solid foundation on which to build their learning in early years. Over the past three years, the proportion of children reaching a good level of development has risen sharply; it has been above the national average for the third year in succession. You aspire for even more children to reach this expected standard and even exceed it, given their average level of skills and knowledge when they begin school.
- Children in early years have superb relationships with their classmates, including pupils in Year 1. Children enjoy school and talk excitedly about what they are doing and learning. They are creative and imaginative. Children enthusiastically share their work with others. During the inspection, children made water slides and swings for the teacher's meerkat to play on, after seeing the footprints it had left on the classroom carpet!
- Children are mature beyond their years and responsive to adults because staff have high expectations of them. Staff skilfully engage children in dialogue and ask searching questions that deepen their understanding in all areas of their learning. Early years staff ensure that children have access to activities that help them to make progress across the breadth of the early years curriculum. Leaders plan to make this even better by developing the outdoor area to provide a plethora of highly stimulating experiences that will help children make even greater progress in the future.
- You have very few pupils who are eligible for additional government funding. Because of this, it is hard to compare how well disadvantaged pupils perform year on year. During this inspection, I examined this group of pupils' progress to evaluate whether their achievement is good enough. I found that you make certain that funding is used very well to ensure that most disadvantaged pupils make good progress from their starting points.
- In class, there is no variation in participation or the opportunities afforded to disadvantaged pupils and those who have special educational needs and/or disabilities. This is because teachers are profoundly aware of their individual needs. However, there is some variation in disadvantaged pupils' progress and attainment compared to other pupils and fewer of them achieve the highest levels of attainment, described as 'working at greater depth'.
- Evidence in pupils' work and in lessons shows that the most able pupils, including disadvantaged most able pupils, are provided with activities that encourage them to think deeply and apply their learning in a range of ways. These pupils are able to competently and eloquently describe the strategies they use to tackle complex

problems in mathematics and draw on previous learning to write text that absorbs an audience. An older most-able pupil wrote, 'The venomous, slate black cape of darkness swept over the barren heath, shrouding it in the folds of its midnight robe.' However, fewer boys reach greater depth than girls in English.

- The progress that pupils make in mathematics has been characteristically high over time. Unusually, during key stage 2, pupils who left in 2016 made less progress in mathematics than in English. We looked at this area of pupils' outcomes together to make sure that this dip was not indicative of a deeper issue relating to the quality of teaching in mathematics. Encouragingly, you have made a swift response to improving outcomes in mathematics and, as a result, the vast majority of current pupils are on track to make at least expected progress. Teachers are providing them with numerous activities in mathematics where they have to reason and apply their learning so that pupils of all abilities feel challenged to achieve their best. There is still some variation in the progress of groups, such as disadvantaged pupils, which you are determined to address.
- The curriculum is broad and balanced and provides a wealth of opportunities for pupils to experience exciting trips and learn from knowledgeable visitors. Parents recognise that teachers 'work hard to make lessons and topics interesting'. Excellent links are made between subjects so that pupils can apply their learning in a range of ways. Teachers have high expectations of what pupils can achieve across the curriculum so that their progress in a wide range of subjects is equally as good as in English and mathematics. Visually stunning displays adorn the classrooms and corridors to celebrate this creditable aspect of the school's work.

Next steps for the school

Leaders and those responsible for governance should:

- increase the proportion of pupils who exceed expected standards, known as greater depth, in the early years and both key stages
- ensure that all groups of pupils, including those who are disadvantaged, make consistently strong progress across a wide range of subjects so that they reach the standards of which they are capable
- use pupils' performance information to inform whole-school priorities for the future.

I am copying this letter to the chair of the governing body, the director of education for the Diocese of Chichester and the director of children's services for East Sussex. This letter will be published on the Ofsted website.

Yours sincerely

Abigail Birch
Her Majesty's Inspector

Information about the inspection

I met with you and other leaders, those responsible for safeguarding, including the school business manager, and members of the governing body. I visited all classes in the school to observe pupils' learning with you. I spoke to pupils during lessons and met formally with a group of pupils to gather their views. No responses were made by pupils to Ofsted's online questionnaire. I looked at their work in a range of subjects alongside subject leaders. I took account of 35 responses to Ofsted's online questionnaire, Parent View, and 28 written contributions by parents. I spoke to parents at the start of the school day. There was one response made through the voluntary staff survey. I analysed a range of the school's documentation, including information about pupils' achievement, school policies and safeguarding procedures. I also discussed with leaders the evaluation of the school's effectiveness.