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Mrs Helen Smith
Headteacher
Wivelsfield Primary School
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Dear Mrs Smith

Short inspection of Wivelsfield Primary School

Following my visit to the school on 23 February 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 March 2013.

This school continues to be good.

The leadership team has maintained the good quality of education in the school since the last inspection. You aspire for the school to become outstanding and are aware of what needs to improve to make it so. Since taking up your position, you have built a strong leadership team around you. Your partnership with governors is productive. Plans to expand the school are being managed well, with leaders and governors working in close partnership with the local authority. New classrooms are nearly ready to be occupied and there is a sense of excitement in the air as the school grows under your leadership.

Pupils enjoy coming to school at Wivelsfield. They told me that teachers help them with their work, 'but don't give us the answers'. They enjoy the school's curriculum and were eager to tell me about the educational visits they make, including to Windsor Castle and the Royal Pavilion, Brighton. I was particularly impressed with the caring attitudes pupils expressed during my formal discussion with a representative group. They were very clear that people are expected to look after each other, 'even when they are cross with each other'. One pupil told me the school is a very happy place, 'because people smile ... even the teachers smile here'.

Visits to classrooms confirmed that pupils enjoy learning, although we did witness some off-task behaviour when teaching did not engage pupils' attention fully. Levels of challenge, particularly for the most-able pupils, were appropriate. Children in Reception were keen to show me their work. I was particularly interested to see

how boys engage in learning, especially in the early years and key stage 1. You were able to show me how the curriculum enthuses boys, and I saw first-hand the impact that staff are having in supporting the few boys who need to make more progress to catch up. It was clear that your current focus on improving writing across the school has a high priority.

At the time of the last inspection, inspectors highlighted the many strengths of the school, including that pupils made good progress in English and mathematics, and showed excellent attitudes to learning. They also identified the need for leaders to increase the proportion of outstanding teaching and accelerate the rate of progress of all pupils. Leaders have dealt with these matters successfully. Most pupils are making good or better progress across a range of subjects. School leaders' monitoring of the quality of teaching and learning over time shows that most is consistently good or better, with an increasing proportion rated as outstanding.

Since the last inspection, school leaders have continued the important process of self-evaluation in order to identify the key priorities to improve the school. You were able to explain clearly the school's many strengths, as well as the areas that need to be developed, including your priority to enhance the outdoor learning environment. We also agreed that pupils need to make better progress in writing, so that pupils' outcomes in writing more closely match their excellent outcomes in reading.

Safeguarding is effective.

Arrangements to safeguard pupils are fit for purpose. Policies and procedures are robust and day-to-day routines are sound. These include the supervision of the way pupils start and finish the school day. Pre-employment checks to ensure the suitability of staff are fully in place. Staff and governors have attended appropriate training. Appropriate risk assessments are in place and the school site, including boundary fences and gates, is well maintained.

The culture to protect pupils and ensure their safety is well developed. Staff understand their responsibilities regarding keeping children safe. Induction procedures for new staff are sound. Parents who spoke to me during the inspection feel their children are safe at school. Pupils told me they feel the school is a safe place to be and are knowledgeable about the potential dangers of using the internet and social media.

Inspection findings

- You have identified writing as a key area for improvement across the school. Recent national test and assessment results highlighted a wide difference in outcomes between reading and writing at the end of key stage 2, particularly in the proportion of pupils working at greater depth in writing. You know that pupils of all abilities need to make more progress in writing and have introduced a number of strategies to address this. Early indications are that these are beginning to have a positive impact.

- Provision for the school's most able pupils is sound, although their outcomes in writing by the end of key stage 2 are not as strong as those in reading and mathematics. Classroom visits showed that expectation is high. Evidence in books shows that levels of challenge for the most able pupils are appropriate, leading to good progress. This includes in subjects other than mathematics and English. You are rightly proud of the achievements of the most able pupils in the arts and sport.
- Pupils from disadvantaged backgrounds do well at Wivelsfield, although there are too few to make meaningful comparisons with other pupils nationally. Nevertheless, school leaders and governors are acutely aware of their responsibilities to ensure that provision for pupils from vulnerable groups is as effective as it can be. This includes identifying and eliminating potential barriers to learning and ensuring a fully inclusive ethos across the school.
- In the recent past, girls have performed better than boys in the early years and key stage 1. This situation depends largely on the differences between cohorts each year. School leaders are aware of this and monitor the progress of all pupils well. This ensures that effective support is available for any pupil in danger of falling behind, or those who need to make more progress to catch up with their peers.

Next steps for the school

Leaders and those responsible for governance should ensure that:

- pupils make better progress in writing, so that outcomes in writing more closely match those seen in reading by the end of key stage 2
- the school's extensive outdoor environment is developed further, in order to fully utilise the rich learning opportunities it offers.

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

Yours sincerely

Clive Close
Her Majesty's Inspector

Information about the inspection

During the inspection you accompanied me on visits to every class and year group. I assessed pupils' behaviour and attitudes to learning in classrooms and around the school. I also observed part of an assembly. I held meetings with you and your deputy, the chair of governors accompanied by two other governors, and a group of

pupils. I talked to representatives of the local authority. I met parents at the start of the school day and took into account 70 responses to Ofsted's online questionnaire, Parent View, and accompanying free text responses. I scrutinised a wide range of documentation, including pupils' progress information, the school's self-evaluation and improvement planning, policies, minutes of governing body meetings and records of visits by the local authority.