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15 March 2017

Mrs Caroline Harvey
Sedlescombe C of E Primary School
Brede Lane
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Dear Mrs Harvey

Short inspection of Sedlescombe C of E Primary School

Following my visit to the school on 21 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 2012.

This school continues to be good.

The leadership team has maintained the good quality of education in the school since the last inspection.

Since your appointment in September 2016, you have worked sensitively and constructively with a team of staff and governors to review the school's work. You have recognised and nurtured existing strengths in teaching and learning and have accurately identified priorities for future developments. You have already secured some notable improvements. For example, you have strengthened support for pupils who have emotional and behavioural difficulties, improved safeguarding procedures and increased subject and year group leaders' roles in the school's development.

You have quickly won the confidence of staff, governors and parents alike. Staff clearly feel that their work is valued by leaders and governors. All staff who completed the Ofsted questionnaire say that they are supported well, enjoy working in the school and are proud to be a member of staff. High staff morale makes a strong contribution to the school's happy, confident atmosphere.

Parents appreciate teachers' and leaders' commitment to making sure that all pupils achieve well. One commented, 'This school puts children first – they are at the centre of everything the school does', a sentiment which was repeated by many.

Pupils are attentive and interested in lessons. They behave well in school and play sensibly during playtimes. Pupils get on very well with each other. They respect

adults and work hard. They wear their school uniform with pride and look extremely smart.

Governors provide effective challenge and support for you and your team. They have worked very effectively with you and with the local authority during the past year to ensure a smooth and seamless transition in leadership. Well-established systems for checking the school's work, including governors' visits to classrooms, ensure that they are knowledgeable about the quality of teaching and about pupils' achievement.

You and your team have successfully addressed the areas for improvement identified at the time of your school's most recent inspection. Your school development plan is fit for purpose and clearly identifies relevant priorities for improvement. You and your Reception teacher have improved the teaching of mathematics in the early years, giving children more opportunities to use and develop number skills through a broad range of activities. As a result, children's progress in mathematics during early years has improved.

You have established a consistent approach to developing pupils' spelling skills in key stage 2. Pupils produce writing of an increasingly high quality during key stage 2 and make better progress in writing than at the time of the previous inspection. They write for a wide range of purposes and audiences and learn how to use vocabulary to good effect. You have rightly identified that pupils could make even better progress in writing, particularly the most able, during key stage 2.

Safeguarding is effective.

You and your leadership team give pupils' safety a high priority and ensure that safeguarding arrangements are fit for purpose. You make sure that staff are alert to pupils' personal and emotional well-being. You follow up any safeguarding concerns promptly and appropriately. High-quality and detailed records contribute well to pupils' safety and well-being. You have improved safeguarding procedures since your appointment. For example, you have made sure that all staff have completed appropriate training and are knowledgeable about what to do should a safeguarding issue arise.

You and your team make sure that the school is secure, orderly and well maintained, so that pupils can learn and play safely. Pupils say that they feel very safe in school. They feel that teachers are interested in their views and are happy to help them with any problems.

Inspection findings

- During this inspection, I focused particularly on: how effectively teaching during key stage 2 supports pupils' progress in writing, especially for the most able pupils; how well teaching ensures that children in the early years, particularly boys, achieve well in mathematics; and how thoroughly leaders and governors check pupils' safety. I also considered how well leaders have addressed the areas

for improvement identified at the previous inspection. These areas related to the quality of teaching, standards in English and mathematics at the end of key stage 2, and how well leaders use development plans to check improvements.

- Standards at the end of both key stages have been consistently higher than national averages in reading, writing and mathematics since the previous inspection. The results of the Year 1 national phonics check have been equally positive. In 2016, all pupils achieved expected levels in the Year 1 phonics check. As a result, pupils currently in Year 2 are equipped well with key reading and writing skills to support the next stage of their learning.
- Good-quality training has ensured that teaching during key stage 2 builds more effectively on pupils' achievements in reading, writing and mathematics than at the time of the previous inspection. All groups make good progress, including disadvantaged pupils. However, some pupils could make even better progress in writing, particularly the most able. Teachers do not always have the same high expectations of pupils' written work in subjects such as science and religious education as they do in English. As a result, there are variations in the quality of pupils' writing in different subjects.
- Leaders give careful attention to making sure that pupils attend regularly and are safe. They responded swiftly to a dip in pupils' attendance in 2015, working closely with parents and agencies to reinforce the importance of regular attendance and to support families. Attendance improved in 2016 as a result. Information about pupils' current attendance indicates that improvements have been sustained. There is no significant difference between different groups of pupils' attendance. Most pupils, including disadvantaged pupils and those who have special educational needs and/or disabilities, attend regularly and punctually.
- In the past, exclusions have been higher than national averages. The headteacher has worked closely with her team to review and strengthen the behaviour policy since her appointment. Clearer procedures and sanctions have been put in place in the past academic year. There have been no exclusions since the current headteacher was appointed.
- The headteacher and inclusion leader have recently established a helpful nurture group which provides high-quality support for pupils who find school more difficult. Pupils who attend this group have made remarkable progress in a relatively short time. They have developed personal skills and positive attitudes rapidly, which are helping them to achieve well in the classroom. One parent commented, 'My child has blossomed. I cannot tell you how much the nurture group has helped, both in school and at home. My child's confidence grows daily.'
- The early years teacher makes sure that activities and equipment appeal to all children's interests. Boys and girls make equally good progress in developing reading, writing and number skills and achieve well. Good-quality mathematics teaching reinforces the link between children's practical experiences of number and written recording. This ensures that children complete number tasks with increasing accuracy and confidence.

Next steps for the school

Leaders and those responsible for governance should ensure that:

- pupils, particularly the most able, make consistently strong progress in writing across a range of subjects
- teachers have the same high expectations of pupils' writing in science, religious education and across the curriculum.

I am copying this letter to the chair of the governing body, the director of education for the Diocese of Chichester, 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

Julie Sackett
Ofsted Inspector

Information about the inspection

You and I visited all seven classes during the inspection. I also visited the nurture group with your inclusion leader. I looked at the work in pupils' books during lessons, as well as looking separately at a sample of pupils' books with your deputy headteacher. I talked with pupils during my visits to the classrooms and during playtime.

I met with you and your deputy headteacher during the inspection. I also met with the chair and vice chairs of the governing body and had a telephone discussion with a local authority representative. I took account of 95 responses to Ofsted's online questionnaire, Parent View, and spoke with parents informally at the start of the school day. I considered 13 responses to Ofsted's online staff questionnaire. I reviewed the school's website and considered a range of documents, including your summary of the school's effectiveness, the school's improvement plan and local authority reports. I also looked at documents about safeguarding and attendance.