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Miss Lois Briard  
Headteacher  
Sandford School  
Sandford  
Crediton  
Devon  
EX17 4NE

Dear Miss Briard

### **Short inspection of Sandford School**

Following my visit to the school on 2 March 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 inspection carried out since the school was judged to be good in May 2012.

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

The leadership team has maintained the good quality of education in the school since the last inspection. There have been several changes in staff since the previous inspection, including your appointment as headteacher. Since your appointment, you have acted promptly in identifying the need for restructuring of staff roles and responsibilities so that the school continues to provide a good standard of education. Such swift actions have enabled the school to maintain its performance and to manage effectively the increasing numbers of pupils joining the school.

The plans to improve the school are precise and you are making good headway in addressing the areas for development that you identified in boys' writing in key stage 2. Furthermore, other leaders, although recently appointed, are also fully aware of the further work that needs to be done to continue to improve the school and the achievement of all pupils.

You have tackled the areas that were identified at the previous inspection as needing improvement. You have worked hard to improve the outdoor learning environment in the early years and have further aspirations to continue to develop the environment even further.

Sandford School is a happy, vibrant place in which to work and learn. Parents are overwhelmingly supportive of the school and all that goes on it. For example, one parent told me, 'Nothing is ever too much at Sandford and everybody is valued.'

The online survey, Parent View, confirms that parents are extremely positive about the quality of education and care that the school provides. This view was echoed by staff in the school. A typical response to the online staff questionnaire was that 'Sandford School has a very supportive teaching team who all work exceptionally well together.' This is an inclusive school, and the school community value the work of you and your staff highly.

### **Safeguarding is effective.**

A culture of safeguarding and welfare is paramount throughout the school. Leaders, including governors, have ensured that all safeguarding requirements are robust and rigorous. Regular safeguarding meetings between the headteacher and lead safeguarding governor have ensured that systems are regularly checked and fit for purpose. Furthermore, you ensure that regular external audits test and sharpen the school's approach to safeguarding. You challenge staff regularly with potential scenarios to ensure that all the staff at school are alert to potential safeguarding concerns. Staff reported to me that 'We have a belief that, although we work in a lovely school, an incident could happen here if we are not switched on to safeguarding.' There is an impressive focus on the regularity of training for safeguarding, including about the government's 'Prevent' duty, intended to counter the risks of radicalisation. Consequently, a range of staff, from across the school, could tell me about the impact of their training and what they need to look out for to keep pupils safe.

Pupils feel safe and explain that they can approach any adult in school if they have a worry or concern. They speak knowledgeably about how to keep safe, including when using information technology and social media. Pupils have a clear understanding of bullying, including cyber bullying, and they are adamant that this does not happen at Sandford.

### **Inspection findings**

- My first line of enquiry related to boys' writing in key stage 2. Boys' writing achievement has fluctuated over time. However in 2016, significant differences existed between boys' and girls' performance. You and your leaders looked closely at why so few boys made good progress from their starting points. Consequently, you identified that spelling, handwriting and technical aspects of structuring writing were barriers to boys making better progress. Although in their infancy, your actions and those of other leaders are starting to have an impact on the skills that were holding boys back. For example, a group of Year 6 boys reported to me that, 'We really like the opportunities to write about exciting things, like when the mysterious tent appeared upon the field.' Furthermore, your prompt action to change the approach to spelling is starting to have a positive impact. In key stage 1 writing is a strength, particularly so for boys. However, some elements of boys' writing skills in key stage 2, particularly handwriting, spelling and writing to create particular effects, still require further work.
- A second line of enquiry related to the positive progress made by disadvantaged pupils and whether this had been maintained. I found no significant differences

in outcomes between disadvantaged pupils and other pupils nationally. Disadvantaged pupils' reading skills are particularly strong. I listened to pupils reading texts that were typically above age-related expectations with confidence and fluency. In mathematics, disadvantaged pupils reported to me that 'We find maths difficult, but the support we get makes it much easier.' A similar picture was identified in writing, with achievement being at least in line with that of other pupils. Overall, therefore, the progress of disadvantaged pupils currently in the school remains strong.

- Furthermore, parents reported to me that 'Equality of opportunity is a real strength of the school; every child matters and they are not just a statistic.' You give your governors regular, detailed information about the attainment and progress of disadvantaged pupils, on which they challenge you effectively. Governors are aware of how the additional funding for disadvantaged pupils is spent and have evaluated accurately that the money is spent well to improve disadvantaged pupils' progress. Your action plans are precise and well measured against other pupils nationally; as a result, your planned actions continue to improve disadvantaged pupils' outcomes.
- The third line of enquiry concerned the teaching of reading for boys in key stage 2. Pupils who read to me did so with precision and very good fluency from books which were typically above age-related expectations. The most able pupils, including the most able disadvantaged pupils, demonstrated a real flair for reading, being able to swiftly decode unfamiliar words and clarify their understanding using resources effectively. The less confident readers told me that the school's approach to using 'Reading Champions' has improved their enjoyment of reading. They also report that they are given opportunities to read, widely and often, in school and that they experience a range of text types. Consequently, reading has developed into a real strength of the school.
- My fourth line of enquiry explored the difference in academic performance between girls and boys in mathematics by the end of key stage 2. The recently appointed mathematics subject leader has started to bring about change in the approach to teaching of mathematics. But, as with the English subject leader, it is too early to accurately evaluate her impact. However, pupils' work shows clearly that the changes to the way that mathematics is taught are enabling pupils to better apply their knowledge and skills to a range of well-matched activities. Furthermore, the school's approach to questioning prompts the pupils to think more deeply about their work and secure an understanding of a concept before moving on to the next activity. Your assessment information and my inspection evidence indicate that boys are on track to achieve highly at the end of the year.

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

Leaders and those responsible for governance should ensure that:

- the effectiveness of middle leaders continues to develop well and contributes strongly to school improvement

- teaching improves boys' writing in key stage 2 by:
  - building on the recent improvements in handwriting and spelling
  - ensuring that teaching capitalises on planned opportunities to develop technical writing skills further, particularly when writing to create specific effects
  - continuing to develop the curriculum, so that it engages the interests of all pupils, particularly the boys.

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

Yours sincerely

Matthew Middlemore  
**Ofsted Inspector**

### **Information about the inspection**

During the inspection I met with you and the English and mathematics leaders to discuss the improvements which have been made since the previous inspection. I also met with several groups of pupils, governors and a group of parents at the start of the school day. I held discussions with four governors, including the chair of governors, and several members of staff. I considered the school's self-evaluation and related action plans. I looked at all safeguarding records and explored your approach to the recruitment of staff with the school administrator. Together, we looked at pupils' work in books from a range of subjects to review the progress being made. We also visited several classrooms across the school and covered a range of subjects. I listened to several groups of pupils read and discussed with them their views of the school. I took account of the 61 responses to Parent View, 21 pupil responses to the pupil questionnaire and 18 to the staff questionnaire.