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Mr David Jones
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Dear Mr Jones

Short inspection of Craneswater Junior School

Following my visit to the school on 8 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 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 have led the school with a high degree of care and empathy since 2003. Staff, governors and parents have confidence in your leadership. As one parent wrote: 'The headteacher runs a tight ship whilst being approachable to the children. I wouldn't want my child to be at any other school.'

You have built a team of dedicated teachers and leaders who work well together and are respected by the local community. Your recently strengthened leadership team is well placed to oversee the current expansion of the school. Their expertise in further developing teaching and in supporting pupils' individual needs is securing substantial improvements in pupils' learning. Consequently, most pupils make good progress across the curriculum.

You, leaders and governors have an accurate view of the school's strengths and areas for further development. You have adapted teaching well to meet the demands of the new curriculum, although this has taken more time to embed in writing. At the last inspection we asked you to improve the quality of writing for pupils who have special educational needs and/or disabilities. You have responded to this successfully, specifically by making sure that teachers and teaching assistants develop these pupils' resilience and independence when writing. Work in books shows the strong progress made by pupils who have special educational needs and/or disabilities.

The previous inspection judged behaviour to be outstanding, and this has not changed. You and your team make sure the school has a friendly and welcoming community atmosphere. Pupils are exceptionally well behaved in lessons and around the school. They are confident, enjoy learning, work hard, and readily participate in the extra-curricular activities which you provide, such as 'coding club' and the school council. Attendance is high and improving still further, including for groups of pupils who have previously struggled to come to school regularly. Several parents were keen to tell me how well their children settle at your school, particularly those who join from outside of Portsmouth. The inclusive culture of your school is best exemplified by the weekly singing assembly, when all pupils and teachers sing the school song joyfully together.

Safeguarding is effective.

You and your team ensure that pupils are well cared for and safe. Leaders and governors have made sure that recruitment procedures are robust and that staff training in child protection is thorough. Staff speak confidently about how to report any concerns they may have and know that they are taken seriously. You act promptly, involving outside agencies where appropriate, so that pupils get the care they need. The pupils I spoke to were very clear that they know how to keep themselves safe, both online and in their community. They said that bullying is rare, but if it does happen it is sorted out quickly. Pupils told me that there is always an adult they can talk to if they have a problem. They feel safe and happy in school. The vast majority of parents agree. As one parent said: 'My daughter goes to school smiling every morning and she feels safe and respected there.'

Inspection findings

- During this inspection, my focus areas were: how well the culture in the school promotes safeguarding; how effectively the school teaches writing, particularly for boys; how well the school makes sure that pupils make good progress in mathematics and in reading, particularly disadvantaged pupils; and whether leaders are ensuring that good-quality teaching is helping pupils to make rapid progress from their starting points.
- Previously published results show that pupils did not make as much progress as they could in writing, particularly middle-attaining pupils and boys. You have addressed this by changing how writing is taught, paying particular attention to grabbing boys' attention from the start of a project. You have also focused on improving pupils' confidence in writing, as well as the quality of what they write, by creating frequent opportunities to talk about their writing with each other. You have increased the opportunities for pupils to practise their writing. You expect the same standards in writing across the whole curriculum, so that pupils' work in their topic books is planned, edited and improved in the same way as in their English books. Pupils who need extra help with their writing appreciate the careful attention teachers pay to their work, which is helping them to improve rapidly. The school's information shows that an improved proportion of pupils are now achieving the expected standard in writing. However, you acknowledge that more pupils should now be aiming to achieve the high standard in writing,

particularly the most able pupils.

- Last year, pupils' progress in mathematics was similar to pupils' progress nationally. However, disadvantaged pupils made less progress than they are capable of. Your thorough evaluation of what this group of pupils need to do to make rapid progress has led to changes in teaching and to the curriculum, which are helping all pupils to improve their mathematical understanding. Teaching carefully tracks disadvantaged pupils' next steps in learning so that pupils are clear about what they need to do to improve. The increased use of practical equipment is helping them to solve mathematical problems more effectively. You make sure that pupils apply their mathematical skills well across the curriculum. For example, in science, pupils enjoyed working out the angles of reflection in laser mazes. They then wrote about their learning in detail, further strengthening improvements in both mathematics and in writing. As a result of this careful work, the progress of all pupils in mathematics is more rapid and the progress of disadvantaged pupils is accelerating towards that of other pupils nationally.
- You have made sure that pupils, including disadvantaged pupils, are making more progress in reading than they have in the past. Reading has a high priority in your school, with frequent opportunities for pupils to read during the school day. Teaching assistants skilfully support pupils who need extra help with phonics to improve their reading skills. A renewed, consistent focus on teaching reading and careful attention to the type of books read in class is helping all pupils to gain confidence in their reading abilities and to make more progress, particularly boys and disadvantaged pupils. Leaders have made sure that pupils with little access to books outside of school are able to take more books home from the well-stocked library. Older boys suggest books which they have enjoyed to younger ones, so helping boys to read more widely and enthusiastically. Pupils I spoke to during the inspection were very keen to tell me that they were getting better at reading. One pupil confidently explained that he now enjoys reading books without pictures, 'because I am more able to imagine the setting and the characters that way'.
- At the last inspection we asked you to further improve the quality of teaching across the school. You and your able senior team have successfully addressed this through the high priority you give to training all teachers and teaching assistants to be the best that they can be. Your regular monitoring has allowed you to accurately identify the strengths in teaching and to act where necessary to improve areas of weakness. Staff appreciate opportunities to research more effective ways to improve learning for the pupils in your school. They frequently reflect on their practice, most recently honing their skills so that they have a deeper understanding of how to meet the needs of disadvantaged pupils and to challenge the most able pupils more consistently. Knowledge of what works best is shared among staff well so that your records show teaching is constantly improving, and pupils, especially those who are disadvantaged, are making more progress than they have in the past.

Next steps for the school

Leaders and those responsible for governance should ensure that:

- an improved proportion of pupils achieve the high standard at the end of key stage 2, particularly in writing
- the progress of disadvantaged pupils continues to accelerate so that it matches the progress of others nationally.

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

Yours sincerely

Catherine Old
Her Majesty's Inspector

Information about the inspection

I observed learning with senior leaders in all year groups and most classes, including observing your whole-school singing assembly. I met with you and your senior team throughout the inspection to discuss your self-evaluation of the school and to examine pupils' work. I scrutinised a number of school records, including performance information and records showing your monitoring of teaching. I met with teachers and governors and held a telephone conversation with a representative from the local authority. I spoke to pupils both in class and at playtimes and listened to pupils read. I took account of the 45 responses to Parent View, Ofsted's online survey, 73 responses to Ofsted's confidential pupil survey and 35 responses to Ofsted's confidential staff survey. I spoke to several parents informally before school and considered the 45 free-text responses submitted via Parent View.