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Mr Simon Simmons
Headteacher
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Dear Mr Simmons

Short inspection of Barns Green Primary School

Following my visit to the school on 14 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 November 2012.

This school continues to be good.

The leadership team has maintained the good quality of education in the school since the last inspection. The recent restructuring of the leadership team, involving the appointment of a skilled deputy headteacher, has strengthened leadership. Governors make frequent visits to the school. They talk to pupils and staff to evaluate the impact of the school's policies on everyday practice. Governors ask pertinent questions of leaders, both in formal governing body meetings and during visits to the school. They share your accurate understanding of the school's strengths and areas that require further work.

You have a clear vision for the school which is shared by the deputy headteacher and governors. It is clear to see that strong, collective leadership is providing the capacity for the school to improve still further.

You are determined to provide the best for all pupils at Barns Green. You explained how you have strengthened the system for checking the progress of pupils. This is helping you and your teachers to have a firm grasp on how well pupils are learning. Pupils who are in danger of falling behind, or those who need extra help, are supported well.

Pupils are proud of their impressive new building. Older pupils told me that they liked being with the younger pupils, helping them at playtime now that everyone is on one site. Pupils enjoy school. They work cooperatively together and I frequently saw pupils helping each other in class. One Year 5 pupil told me, 'Everyone is at

different stages, it does not matter what year you are in, you get work that challenges you to do better'. It was a pleasure to hear pupils talking so confidently about their learning, how they had improved their writing and how their teachers help them to understand something when they are stuck.

You explained how you are encouraging pupils to enjoy reading. You have successfully promoted reading around the school. During the day, I saw how well pupils are using the bright and inviting library. Several pupils I spoke to were keen to tell me about the books they enjoy.

Pupils benefit from the rich curriculum which the school provides. Topics are enhanced by visits to the local area and further afield, including a residential visit to the Isle of Wight. Sport has a high profile in the school and pupils are proud of their sporting successes.

Most parents are supportive of you and your staff. There are, however, some parents who have concerns about the work of the school. You have done much in partnership with governors to open channels of communication with parents. For example, you held a meeting for parents following the 2016 results, held reading and mathematics workshops for parents and introduced a Friday 'drop in', where parents can talk to teachers and the school's leaders. As a result, there are many opportunities for parents to discuss any concerns with staff. However, you know you need to do more to make sure that parents know about the good work of the school, so that they can all develop trust and confidence in what it provides.

The strengths in the school identified in the previous inspection report have been maintained. You and your team have worked determinedly to improve writing since the school was last inspected. Although the writing results in 2016 were disappointing, inspection findings showed that pupils currently in the school are making good progress in writing. You identified correctly that teachers lacked confidence in their ability to assess writing, with the higher expectations of the new curriculum. As a result, you have worked successfully with other schools in the Weald Family of Schools (nine local schools), as well as with other external support, to improve teachers' accuracy in assessing writing.

A scrutiny of writing across the school showed that pupils now develop good writing skills, write with increasing fluency and use their secure phonic knowledge to spell increasingly accurately. You have also focused on improving pupils' handwriting and this is paying dividends. Many pupils now write neatly and can concentrate on the content of their writing, rather than being slowed down by poor handwriting skills.

Safeguarding is effective.

The leadership team has ensured that safeguarding arrangements are fit for purpose and records are detailed and of high quality. Staff receive annual training and frequent updates to make sure they know the most recent information.

Most parents who expressed an opinion think that the school is a safe place to be.

Relationships between staff and pupils are strong. Pupils told me that they feel safe and that they can talk to an adult about any concerns. Parents told me that they valued your presence on the playground in the morning so that they can talk to you about any worries they may have. Pupils are taught how to stay safe, for example when using technology or crossing the road.

A small minority of parents raised concerns about poor behaviour, including bullying. However, behaviour logs and discussions with staff and pupils show that the very few incidents of poor behaviour are dealt with appropriately. Pupils typically behave well.

Pupils' attendance is good. Staff work closely with the families of the very small number of pupils whose attendance is a concern and there are examples where this has resulted in improved attendance of individual pupils.

Inspection findings

- The inspection considered the progress of pupils in key stage 1. Historically, the school has ensured that pupils achieve well in key stage 1. In 2016, pupils did not achieve as well as in previous years. You responded quickly to these results and have made sure that pupils are catching up in Year 3.
- Pupils' workbooks show that most pupils currently in Years 1 and 2 are working at age-related expectations. Good phonics provision in the early years and Year 1 has meant that the proportion of pupils reaching the expected standard in the Year 1 phonics check has improved year-on-year. However, while teaching, learning and assessment in key stage 1 are effective, leaders know that the successful strategies evident in key stage 2 could be shared more fully to improve outcomes for pupils in key stage 1.
- The achievement of children in the early years was also an inspection focus. In 2016, the proportion of children reaching a good level of development at the end of Reception was slightly lower than the national average. However, currently, children are making good progress from their individual starting points.
- Most children join Reception with levels of skills which are typical for their age. However, there has been a pattern over the last two years of children's literacy and language skills being less well-developed on entry. In response to this, staff have adapted their teaching to focus on developing children's language skills. This approach is proving successful. For example, during the inspection children were encouraged to use vocabulary such as 'often' and 'sometimes' to describe how frequently they should eat different sorts of foods. Teachers plan exciting activities which motivate children. Two boys were eager for me to see their writing about animals. They were able to write sentences independently which demonstrated an appropriately developed understanding of phonics.
- Although provision in Reception is effective, leaders and the early years teachers are not complacent. Leaders recognise that while provision in the early years supports children's good progress, more could be done to make the outside area as engaging and effective as the environment inside. This is why improvements

to the outside area form part of the school's improvement plan.

- The inspection also investigated pupils' progress in writing in key stage 2. Pupils in Years 3 and 4 learn to use ambitious vocabulary to make their writing interesting. They were keen to show me the myths they had written which demonstrate their growing understanding of how to use different techniques to improve their writing.
- Pupils in Years 5 and 6 write at length and sustain a good quality of writing, making appropriate improvements which demonstrate a growing sophistication. One Year 6 boy demonstrated his good understanding of effective writing by explaining how he had improved a sentence to give an 'alliterative effect'. Pupils reflect on their own work and that of others to make their writing lively and interesting.
- The number of disadvantaged pupils in key stage 2 is too small to be reported on. However, disadvantaged pupils currently in key stage 2, including the most able, are making good progress.

Next steps for the school

Leaders and those responsible for governance should ensure that:

- the outside area in the early years is further developed to provide better opportunities to support children's learning
- the effective practice evident in key stage 2 is shared more widely across the school
- positive relationships continue to be developed with all parents.

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

Yours sincerely

Joanna Toulson
Ofsted Inspector

Information about the inspection

I met with you, your deputy headteacher and representatives of the governing body. I also held telephone conversations with a representative of the local authority and an independent adviser who has worked with the school for several years. You and I spent most of the day in classrooms, observing teaching and learning, talking to pupils and looking at their work. I met with a small group of pupils to talk about their learning and to capture their views of school life. I took account of the 58 responses by parents to Ofsted's online survey and two letters

received during the inspection. I also spoke to several parents at the start and end of the school day. I looked at a range of documentation, including information about pupils' progress and records relating to safeguarding.