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Mr Simon Dawson
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Dear Mr Dawson

Short inspection of Wey House School

Following my visit to the school on 3 May 2017 with John Bosley, Ofsted Inspector, 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 May 2013.

This school continues to be good.

You have led the school with dedication and resilience over the past two years, often making difficult but necessary decisions, to secure effective education for pupils that is highly focused on learning. You are ambitious for pupils and aspire for them to return to mainstream education whenever possible. Staff and governors share your goals and are dedicated to the pursuit of this aim. Staff are extremely proud to work at the school and of the difference they make to pupils' lives. They speak highly of your leadership and the opportunities you give to them to achieve their own dreams. You unite with them to form a highly committed and effective staff team who are motivated to continually improve the school.

The local authority has offered high-quality support to the school during the past four years, and in particular prior to the start of your leadership in 2015 when there was a period of upheaval to the leadership and management of the school, which resulted in declining standards. However, you have welcomed the continued support. You have also taken advantage of the wealth of training and expertise brokered by the local authority to support the school, for example in mathematics. You have forged positive relationships with local mainstream and special schools to share good practice and to ensure that the judgements that staff make about how well pupils are achieving are correct.

Consequently, the school has gone from strength to strength and regained its positive reputation within the community. Standards have rapidly improved, and

because of this, the leadership team has recovered successfully the good quality of education evident in the school at the time of the last inspection.

You have worked hard, and continue to address the areas for improvement identified at the time of the previous school inspection. Inspectors required leaders to make certain that pupils' work is sufficiently challenging, especially for the most able pupils, and to provide pupils with greater opportunities to reflect on their own learning and also that of their classmates. Inspectors also asked the school to make sure that pupils are motivated to write in all subjects. Pupils are making better progress in writing than in the past, including the most able and disadvantaged pupils. However, pupils' progress in writing still lags behind other subjects. Pupils are making evaluative judgements about how well they have met the learning objectives for each lesson so that they can think about what they need to do to make their work better. The curriculum is currently being revised to create even more opportunities for pupils to be inspired and motivated in a range of subjects, including in their writing.

You know the strengths of the school very well. You are clear and honest about what could be even better. Because of this, you have driven improvement in standards across the school and overcome obstacles, such as the retention and recruitment of staff along the way. You know that your pursuit of better outcomes for pupils in writing needs to continue. You realise that work does not consistently meet the needs of pupils in lessons, especially the most able pupils, and that some interventions put in place to support pupils are so new that you have yet to make certain that they are making a difference. These areas for improvement are identified in your school development plan, and records of governing body meetings show clearly that governors ask searching questions about the progress being made towards improving pupils' outcomes.

Governors make a strong contribution to strategic leadership. Governors are an effective team that adds to the capacity of the school to improve further. Together, governors are highly skilled and possess expertise that enables them to challenge leaders and offer valuable support. Governors share your in-depth knowledge of the school's strengths and weaknesses and your determination to address areas for development.

Safeguarding is effective.

Supported by the school's safeguarding team, you have ensured that all safeguarding arrangements are effective, and records are detailed and of high quality. This is underpinned by the depth of knowledge staff have about all pupils' needs and that of their families. A parent wrote, 'The school takes a practical, holistic and child focused approach to my son and our family', going on to say, 'I am listened to and included in my son's education.' Pupils are nurtured and wrapped in care. This care extends to pupils' parents and carers, so that pupils' needs are more consistently met at home and at school. In addition, leaders offer a range of courses to help parents meet their children's needs, including neuro-linguistic programming. Leaders quickly respond to any concerns that parents might have.

Positive relationships between the school and parents mean that formal complaints are exceptionally rare.

Leaders work closely with other professionals to provide high-quality support for pupils who have social, emotional and mental health difficulties. This is enhanced by the school's own therapy team, including speech and language therapists and occupational therapists and the plethora of other therapeutic interventions provided by the school, such as drama therapy and farm therapy. Pupils' positive well-being is at the forefront of the school's safeguarding practice.

Staff are acutely aware of their duty to protect pupils from harm because they receive extensive training and information to help them fulfil their duties to a high standard. Daily staff briefings are used highly effectively by staff to share important information about pupils' emotional and academic needs and to make certain that staff are deployed effectively so that pupils remain safe throughout the school day. Staff are absolutely clear what to do if they are concerned about a colleague's behaviour and who to contact should they need to take matters further.

Pupils feel safe. Their knowledge of how to keep themselves safe online is impressive. Pupils are taught about British values, such as tolerance and respect, in assemblies and as part of their personal, social, health and economic education, which helps them to be better prepared for life in modern Britain. This is reinforced by a strong focus on pupils' social, moral, spiritual and cultural development which is embedded throughout the curriculum.

Inspection findings

- During this inspection, we focused on how well leaders have continued to improve the school's effectiveness and addressed the areas for improvement identified at the time of the previous inspection. We examined the progress that pupils, including disadvantaged pupils, are currently making, particularly in writing and mathematics. We were particularly interested to see how well the most able pupils are being challenged and how effectively the school supports pupils who are disadvantaged. We focused on how well pupils' behaviour is managed and how effectively pupils are prepared for the next stage in their education. In addition, we evaluated the effectiveness of safeguarding and how well the school supports families of pupils who have too many days off school.
- From their starting points, pupils make good progress and are well prepared for the next stage of their education. Nonetheless, you have rightly focused on improving outcomes in pupils' writing because the progress that pupils are making in writing is less strong than in reading and mathematics. Teachers are working hard to think of creative ways to engage pupils in writing. Pupils' work shows that pupils are acquiring effective knowledge in a range of grammatical features, such as idioms and clauses, and pupils' spelling is generally phonically plausible or correct. However, pupils do not transfer these skills across a wide range of subjects or apply them consistently when they are writing at length. This inhibits the progress that pupils are making in their writing.
- In the past, pupils' progress in mathematics has not been as good as it should

have been. Many pupils arrive at the school with disrupted educational experiences which have created wide gaps in their mathematical skills and understanding. Beforehand, frequent staff turnover has meant that gaps in learning have not been closed quickly enough. You have worked hard to address this and engaged expert advice and training for staff. Now, lessons commonly enable pupils to investigate, reason and use their mathematical knowledge to solve problems. Pupils of all abilities are given more opportunities to work at greater depth. As a result, pupils are now making much better progress in mathematics.

- Overall, the most able pupils are challenged and make effective progress because work is generally well matched to their needs. Occasionally, teachers' expectations of what the most able pupils can achieve is variable across subjects. Pupils are given extra support to make sure that they are challenged to think more deeply. Leaders have sought ways to provide extra opportunities for pupils who demonstrate particular aptitudes and talents. For instance, leaders have provided additional mathematics tuition and arranged access to examinations at a local secondary school, so that the most able have achieved as highly as GCSE C grade in mathematics. Sometimes, work in lessons is too easy for the most able pupils, particularly in mathematics, and sometimes the same work is too difficult for the least able pupils. Occasionally, mistakes that pupils make become habitual because they are not corrected by staff quickly enough.
- Pupil premium funding is allocated effectively to ensure that disadvantaged pupils make good progress from their various starting points. Disadvantaged pupils' achievement is in line with their classmates, including those who are the most able. Encouragingly, a high proportion of disadvantaged pupils are making at least expected progress and many are making accelerated progress, especially in reading. This is helping them to quickly diminish differences between their achievement and that of pupils nationally.
- Leaders have established a transition programme that supports pupils to successfully integrate into school life at Wey House. This provides pupils with a very positive start to their education at the school. Leaders have ensured that behaviour strategies are consistently adhered to by staff and that analysis of behavioural trends are used to identify areas for improvement. During this inspection, pupils were supported very well by staff to manage their emotions appropriately. Interactions between staff and pupils are warm, empathetic and positive. Teaching assistants are used well to lead pupils' learning and to engage and enable pupils to think more deeply. They effectively question pupils and allow pupils to learn from their mistakes. Targets, linked to pupils' individual education plans, help pupils know what to do to begin to manage their own behaviour and to focus well on their learning. Hence, pupils participate well in lessons and are not distracted when their friends sometimes find it difficult to cope. Pupils keenly shared their work with inspectors and demonstrated pride in their achievements. They accepted positive feedback about their work.
- The impact of the school on pupils' behaviour is tangible. Pupils' behaviour improves while they attend the school. The number of fixed-term exclusions and behaviour incidents has reduced. The local authority representative stated that 'standards of pupils' behaviour and preparedness for learning have been

transformed'. Pupils are prepared well for the next stage in their education because the school works effectively with secondary provision to ensure that the needs of pupils are met. Leaders continually seek ways to help pupils develop important social skills, such as resilience and positive feelings of self-worth, so that pupils can become responsible citizens.

- There is a strong emphasis on therapeutic intervention to help pupils build healthy attitudes about themselves and others. Leaders have yet to develop systems that will allow them to fully measure the difference these and other interventions are having on pupils' well-being and, therefore, readiness to learn.
- You work hard to make sure that pupils attend school every day. You think of creative incentives to encourage pupils to attend when they are reluctant to come to school. The school works closely with the education welfare officer to work alongside families whose children take too many days off school. This is having a very positive effect. The attendance of most pupils improves substantially while they are at the school, enabling them to make better progress in their learning than in the past.

Next steps for the school

Leaders and those responsible for governance should:

- check that pupils are using their knowledge of English grammar, punctuation and spelling in their writing and across a wide range of subjects
- provide pupils with ample opportunities to apply and develop their writing across the wider curriculum, to increase the progress that they are making
- ensure that learning is well matched to pupils' needs, particularly for the most able pupils in mathematics
- seek ways to evaluate the effect of interventions, such as the range of therapies provided by the school, on pupils' personal well-being and readiness to learn.

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

Yours sincerely

Abigail Birch
Her Majesty's Inspector

Information about the inspection

We met with you, other school leaders, a representative of the local authority and four members of the governing body, including the chair of governors, who is a national leader of governance. We observed learning, with the head of teaching and learning, in all year groups and observed pupils at breaktime. We spoke to pupils during lessons, and met with them formally to gather their views. We looked at pupils' work in a range of subjects, including English, mathematics and topic with

the head of teaching and learning. We took account of four responses to Ofsted's online questionnaire, Parent View, and four written contributions by parents. We spoke to a parent at the end of the school day. In addition, we met with a group of staff to gather their views about the school. We analysed a range of the school's documentation, including information about the achievement of pupils, school policies, notes of visits conducted by the local authority and safeguarding procedures. We also discussed your self-evaluation with you.