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Mrs Cara Head  
Headteacher  
Netley Abbey Infant School  
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Dear Mrs Head

### **Short inspection of Netley Abbey Infant School**

Following my visit to the school on 11 July 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 December 2011.

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

The leadership team has maintained the good quality of education in the school since the last inspection. Since joining the school in April 2016, you have had a significant impact on improving teaching and raising standards. For example, outcomes in the Year 1 phonics screening check, which were falling year on year, are now improving. Together with the governing body, you are determined that leadership responsibility will be more widely shared across the school. You have successfully developed other leaders so that they are taking increasing responsibility for standards, the quality of teaching and even the performance of their colleagues. This new approach has not been popular with everyone. Not all staff have been happy about taking their fair share of the responsibility for the well-being, behaviour and progress of all pupils. However, you have been steadfast in your view that it is everyone's responsibility to help pupils to learn and be part of the community.

The majority of parents are very positive about the school and your leadership – for example, one parent wrote: 'The new headteacher appears to have made a positive impact on the school in terms of bringing about change. I have confidence in her abilities... she appears to not be afraid to make her mark which I view as positive.' However, a number of parents expressed concerns about the changes you are making, and about children's safety and behaviour. Although I could not see any foundation for these concerns during the inspection, it is clear that more work is needed to help parents to understand, in an appropriate way, the reasons why changes are made and how the school works effectively to keep pupils safe.

You have valued and built on the well-established positive learning culture of the school introduced by your predecessor. Central to this is the exciting curriculum that is cleverly explained to pupils as a 'learning adventure'. In the early years, children settle in to school life quickly; they play and learn well together, both inside and outside, and make good progress. Pupils enjoy the wide range of themes they get to explore and learn about, ranging from 'yucky worms' in Reception to 'The Great Fire of London' and 'superheroes' in key stage 1. Pupils have many opportunities to apply their writing skills across the curriculum and this is certainly helping to improve standards in this area, including for boys. Special events, such as the 'sports week' which took place during the inspection, provide pupils with even wider opportunities. Pupils play well together and value their friendships. They enjoy coming to school, and attendance is improving as a result.

At the time of the previous inspection, leaders were asked to improve teaching, boys' writing, attendance, and the time spent learning about a range of subjects. This was nearly six years ago, and these priorities were all addressed by previous leaders, for example by introducing the current curriculum to promote other subjects. You rightly recognised that boys were once again falling behind in 2016 and have worked hard to improve their performance this year.

Teaching at Netley Abbey Infants is often highly interactive and enables pupils to develop their skills well in a range of subjects. For example, we saw together some good examples of pupils developing their mathematical problem-solving and reasoning skills to solve some sporty problems. However, we agreed that, with better support, pupils who have special educational needs and/or disabilities and those who are disadvantaged could make even more progress. Sometimes, teaching assistants do not have the skills to deepen pupils' learning well enough. The most qualified staff do not get to work frequently enough with the pupils who need the most support.

### **Safeguarding is effective.**

You have ensured that safeguarding arrangements are fit for purpose and records are detailed and of high quality. Rigorous checks are carried out when staff are recruited. Staff receive immediate safeguarding training when they start in their roles and this is updated formally on an annual basis. Staff are very clear on their responsibilities to safeguard pupils.

Strong links with professionals in other agencies and with the neighbouring junior school allow you to keep the pupils in your care safe from harm. Members of the governing body have particular expertise in safeguarding. This has helped to strengthen their checks on school procedures.

## Inspection findings

- At the start of this inspection, we agreed to focus on: the progress made by boys, especially in writing; how the most able pupils are challenged across the curriculum; how additional funding enables disadvantaged pupils to catch up; and how well pupils who have special educational needs and/or disabilities are supported. An additional line of enquiry about pupils' behaviour was added in response to written comments from a minority of parents and staff.
- In recent years, there have been wide gaps in attainment, with girls doing better than boys at the end of both the early years and key stage 1. Current school assessment information shows that outcomes are improving for boys in all year groups. Boys, except those who have special educational needs and/or disabilities, make at least similar progress to girls in their learning. Together we observed boys who were thoroughly engaged in their learning and were keen to write independently. Boys, as much as girls, are highly enthused by the exciting 'learning adventure' curriculum.
- In 2016, there was a dip in achievement for the most able pupils. This year, a greater number of children have exceeded the early learning goals in the early years. More pupils in the current Year 2, including some that are disadvantaged, have demonstrated a greater depth of understanding in their reading, writing and mathematics. Teachers confidently challenge and extend pupils' thinking and learning. For example, in science, pupils planned their own experiments to find solutions to fix a hole in a bucket so they could help 'fight the Great Fire of London'.
- Historically, leaders and governors have not had a strong enough strategy to help disadvantaged pupils to catch up with other pupils nationally. In 2016, these pupils were falling behind their peers in all year groups. Things have improved this year and disadvantaged pupils are beginning to catch up in key stage 1. The most able disadvantaged pupils are demonstrating skills and knowledge with a greater depth of understanding. You recognise there is more to do and have appointed a new leader who joins the school in September. They will have overall responsibility for the progress made by disadvantaged pupils.
- Parents of pupils who have special educational needs and/or disabilities rightly praise the welfare, social and medical support their children receive from additional adults. However, soon after you were appointed, you recognised that many of these pupils were not making enough progress in their learning. You sought and have received additional support from the local authority and a specialist leader of education to help in this area. Expectations in terms of learning are not always high enough for pupils who have special educational needs and/or disabilities. Sometimes, support staff lack the skills and knowledge to move pupils' learning on quickly.
- A small number of parents expressed concerns in the confidential Parent View questionnaire about pupils' behaviour and safety. These concerns had not previously been shared formally with the school. Staff and pupils I spoke to during the inspection confirmed that the positive behaviour I saw was typical. Many of the parents that I spoke to were positive about the behaviour of the

pupils in school. Records of any poor behaviour are kept diligently and analysed regularly by the headteacher, and checked by governors. There has been a clear reduction in the number of incidents of poor behaviour over time. A very justified change of emphasis towards a more inclusive policy has led to a significant decrease in the use of physical intervention and exclusion. A few members of staff do not support this vital change of policy. The few pupils who have additional behaviour needs have appropriate adaptations made to the curriculum. Staff have received suitable training to help them support these pupils.

- Some parents commented about how you are personally available to reassure them about 'playground issues' and put in place effective strategies to deal with their concerns. However, you recognise that you may not have explained your overall rationale for managing pupils' behaviour clearly to the whole parental community.

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

Leaders and those responsible for governance should ensure that:

- there is an even greater focus on the progress of disadvantaged pupils, so that they make rapid progress to catch up with other pupils nationally
- all staff raise their expectations about what pupils who have special educational needs and/or disabilities can achieve
- all adults have the skills and knowledge to deepen pupils' learning
- they engage with parents to help them better understand the many strengths of the school.

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

Yours sincerely

Lee Selby  
**Her Majesty's Inspector**

### **Information about the inspection**

I met with the headteacher frequently throughout the inspection. I also met with a group of five leaders to look at a sample of pupils' work, and with four governors, including the chair and vice-chair. I carried out a learning walk with the headteacher, visiting all classes to observe learning, talking to pupils and looking at pupils' workbooks. Along with the specialist leader of education, I also looked at the provision for pupils who have special educational needs and/or disabilities. I observed pupils playing at lunchtime and spoke to them informally. I considered 91 responses to the online questionnaire, Parent View, including many free-text

comments, and talked to parents before school. I carefully considered 24 responses to the staff survey. Throughout the day, I scrutinised a wide range of documentation, including the school's self-evaluation, school improvement plan, safeguarding records, behaviour records, governors' minutes and attendance information.