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Alan Cocker
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Dear Mr Cocker

Short inspection of Cranborne Primary School

Following my visit to the school on 12 September 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 February 2013.

This school continues to be good.

The leadership team has maintained the good quality of education in the school since the last inspection.

Despite several changes of teaching staff, including three staff taking periods of planned leave, you have ensured that the academic year has got off to a good start. Just over a week into the school year, the school is a calm and orderly place where everyone works hard and does their best.

Cranborne's pupils love their school. It is a happy place where they know that they are valued and liked. Pupils enjoy their lessons and love learning about the wide range of subjects in the school's curriculum. The work in pupils' books shows great care. Pupils respond well to teachers' high expectations of how they should present their work.

Pupils are very polite and friendly. They are proud of their school and keen to talk about what they enjoy and the things that they do. Pupils show excellent attitudes to equality. It is clear that you, and the rest of the school's staff, are playing a key role in helping pupils to understand the difference between right and wrong.

There was a particularly high response to Parent View, Ofsted's online questionnaire. Parents were almost universally positive about the school, with many choosing to write additional supportive comments. For example, one parent said, 'Mr Cocker is the most driven head I have ever come across, his passion and

warmth are incredible', echoing the view of many. Many parents chose to talk about how kind and supportive they find the school's staff, who are always willing to spend time with them and their children.

The previous inspection highlighted a single area for development:

- Accelerate pupils' progress in reading, writing and mathematics by:
 - increasing the proportion of outstanding teaching
 - making more creative use of subjects other than English and mathematics to extend pupils' literacy and numeracy skills.

You have focused appropriately on consolidating and improving the quality of teaching in the school. For example, you have used a commercial training programme aimed at supporting 'good' teachers to become 'outstanding' ones. A number of teachers have successfully completed this programme and you feel that the effectiveness of their teaching has improved as a result.

You have a very accurate understanding of the school's few weaknesses, as well as its many strengths. However, some leaders and governors are too generous in their evaluation of the school. The school's action plan is spread into several parts, some of which are very long, and this makes it unwieldy. The plan does not focus clearly enough on the school's key priorities. A lack of milestones, deadlines, measurable success criteria and monitoring activity means that the document is unlikely to be particularly useful in helping the school to move forward.

Leaders and governors share an ambition for Cranborne to be an outstanding school. Although you are well on the way, there is work still to do. More disadvantaged pupils need to be making very rapid progress, particularly the most able disadvantaged pupils. Assessment of subjects other than English and mathematics needs to be better to ensure that pupils make substantial and sustained progress in all year groups.

Safeguarding is effective.

The leadership team has ensured that safeguarding arrangements are fit for purpose. Records are detailed and of high quality. Effective systems are in place to ensure that only suitable people are employed to work with pupils. All necessary checks are carried out before new staff and volunteers begin working at the school.

You have created a school with a very kind and caring atmosphere. This plays an enormous part in ensuring that pupils are safe at school. Pupils know that they can speak to any member of staff if they are worried about something, whether the problem is at home or at school. Pupils feel safe from bullying. They have great confidence that staff will always help them to sort problems out should they arise.

Inspection findings

- In order to check whether the school remains good, I followed a number of lines of enquiry. Firstly, I looked at whether the most able disadvantaged pupils achieve as well as they should. Results of the key stage 2 national tests in 2016 showed that Cranborne's disadvantaged pupils made much better progress than others nationally in reading and writing, and similar progress in mathematics. However, few disadvantaged pupils reached the higher levels in reading, writing or mathematics.
- Results of the 2017 national tests show a similar pattern for disadvantaged pupils. The vast majority make the progress that they should and reach the expected level. This is seen throughout the school. Leaders monitor the progress of this group of pupils very carefully. They have ensured that there are a range of effective strategies in place, matched to the needs of individuals, to ensure that disadvantaged pupils achieve well.
- Outcomes for this group of pupils are very clearly good but they are not yet outstanding. Too few disadvantaged pupils, including the most able disadvantaged pupils, make very rapid progress in reading, writing and mathematics throughout the school.
- The second area that I checked was whether pupils who have special educational needs and/or disabilities make good progress. I chose to look at this area because little information about this was available to me prior to the inspection.
- The school's new special educational needs coordinator is well qualified for the post and demonstrates good knowledge and understanding of her role. She is being supported effectively during this transition period by the deputy headteacher, who led this area until very recently.
- Both leaders clearly know this group of pupils very well and are ambitious for them. They ensure that a good range of resources, additional adult help and specific educational programmes are put in place to meet the needs of individual pupils. As a result, pupils who have special educational needs and/or disabilities make good progress throughout the school.
- The third area that I checked during this inspection was attendance. The historical data available to me prior to the inspection showed that, although the school's overall attendance rate was the same as the national average, the attendance of two groups was much lower. The attendance of disadvantaged pupils and pupils who have special educational needs and/or disabilities was well below the national average. Persistent absence rates for these two groups were some of the highest in the country.
- You are well aware of the importance of good attendance and have given this area an appropriately high priority. A range of appropriate measures have been put in place, both to encourage and reward good attendance, and to deal with unnecessary absence. The processes that have been put in place are effective. As a result, overall attendance remains similar to the national average, including for pupils who have special educational needs and/or disabilities. The attendance of

disadvantaged pupils is improving as a result of the school's actions but has not yet reached the national average.

- The final key line of enquiry was chosen to explore whether the school's strong assessment results in English and mathematics indicated that outcomes were likely to be better than good. I looked at whether pupils make substantial and sustained progress, rather than strong progress, across the curriculum and in all year groups.
- Pupils learn about an appropriately wide range of subjects in addition to English and mathematics. Pupils enjoy their learning and feel that they make good progress in the subjects they are taught. Pupils are given a wide range of opportunities to broaden their learning. For example, a large proportion of pupils are learning to play a musical instrument.
- Leaders do not have a clear enough picture of the progress that pupils make in the subjects that they are responsible for. They monitor the attainment of the pupils in each class and can track the proportion who are working at, above or below the expected level. However, leaders do not have a clear enough picture of the progress that individual pupils make in the subjects they learn, other than in English and mathematics. The school is currently unable to show evidence that pupils make substantial and sustained progress across the curriculum.

Next steps for the school

Leaders and those responsible for governance should ensure that they:

- improve the assessment and tracking of subjects other than English and mathematics to ensure that individual pupils make substantial and sustained progress from their individual starting points
- increase the proportion of disadvantaged pupils who make very rapid progress throughout the school so that a greater number reach the higher levels in reading, writing and mathematics by the end of key stage 2
- improve the quality of evaluation and improvement planning by ensuring that:
 - all leaders and governors are appropriately self-critical
 - the school's development plan is of a manageable size and includes the details necessary to make it useful in guiding further improvement.

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

Yours sincerely

Wendy Varney
Her Majesty's Inspector

Information about the inspection

During the inspection, I held meetings with you, other senior leaders and a group of governors. I met with a group of pupils and spoke with other pupils during the day. I spoke with a representative of the local authority on the telephone. I took into account the 247 responses to Parent View, 179 text responses and 11 letters from parents. I also took into account the 37 responses that were received to the staff survey. I observed teaching and learning in lessons jointly with you and looked at pupils' exercise books. I scrutinised a range of school documents.