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Lawrence Caughlin
Headteacher
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Dear Mr Caughlin

Short inspection of Swiss Gardens Primary School

Following my visit to the school on 10 October 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 October 2012.

This school continues to be good.

The leadership team has maintained the good quality of education in the school since the last inspection. You, together with your senior and middle leaders, have shaped a school in which pupils are happy and keen to learn. There is a strong culture of nurturing, mutual respect and support, as well as high expectations. The continued success of the school is based on your detailed knowledge of your pupils, an unwavering determination to help them achieve well, and hardworking, dedicated staff. Staff are fully supportive of the direction you set for your school. All of the staff who completed the online survey feel proud to work at Swiss Gardens Primary School and many say that the school has improved since it was last inspected.

Pupils learn in a calm, friendly atmosphere. The school is well maintained and wonderful displays enrich the learning environment. During my visits to classrooms, the atmosphere was purposeful and pupils were appropriately engaged in a range of learning activities. The great majority of parents who responded to Ofsted's online questionnaire would recommend the school to others. Many parents comment positively about the school's work, highlighting how approachable the staff are and the high levels of support provided for their children. Several parents I spoke to said they 'couldn't be happier' with the school. The leader of the local pre-school provision praised the well-planned transition of children into Reception Year.

Senior leaders are well aware of the strengths of the school and those aspects which could be even better. In 2016, pupils' progress in reading at the end of key

stage 2 was above the national level. Pupils' progress in writing and mathematics was not as strong as in reading. Leaders acted decisively to change the way mathematics was taught. The subject leader introduced a new approach, designed to provide greater challenge, promote deeper thinking and encourage pupils to choose for themselves which tasks to attempt. Pupils enjoy taking this responsibility and told me that mathematics was now one of their favourite subjects. Provisional results show that attainment in mathematics rose in 2017. More pupils are reaching the expected standard at the end of both key stages 1 and 2, and there is an increase in the number of pupils reaching higher levels in key stage 2.

You rightly identified that in 2016, the proportions of pupils reaching higher levels in mathematics and writing were below national levels in both key stages 1 and 2. The English subject leader led effective steps to extend the learning of all pupils, particularly the most able, in both reading and writing. She introduced higher-quality texts for pupils to read. There is an increased focus on spelling and handwriting, and an expectation that pupils will edit and improve their written work. Pupils across the school relish responding to teachers' feedback in their books. Encouragingly, outcomes at the end of 2017 reached higher standards, and the quality of writing in books has improved, but the full impact is not yet evident.

Senior leaders have taken effective steps to improve phonics teaching, following a dip in the proportion of Year 1 pupils meeting the expected standard in the phonics screening check. Your deputy headteacher accurately identified why pupils were not progressing fast enough and made appropriate changes. The strengthening of phonics teaching throughout the school has also helped to further improve reading and maintain the strong progress made by children during Reception Year.

Leaders and your specialist 'pupil premium' teacher use detailed knowledge about the difficulties faced by some disadvantaged pupils to apply strategies to help them. These actions are generally successful, and the performance of disadvantaged pupils is improving. However, leaders do not yet evaluate thoroughly the impact of the actions they take on the progress of disadvantaged pupils.

Assessment of pupils' progress is regular, and the progress of each pupil is analysed carefully to identify the 'next steps' pupils need to take to improve further. Governors are fully committed to further improvement at the school. They are aware of the high level of care shown for individual pupils and the steps taken to support those in danger of falling behind. However, the performance of groups, such as pupils who have special educational needs and/or disabilities, the most able pupils and disadvantaged pupils (including the most able disadvantaged), is less well understood. School development plans do not identify targets or milestones for groups of pupils. This makes it difficult for governors to hold senior leaders to account for the actions they have taken to improve the progress of specific groups of pupils. Similarly, greater precision is required in order for leaders and governors to evaluate fully the impact of the school's use of additional pupil premium funding on the achievement of disadvantaged pupils.

Safeguarding is effective.

The leadership team has ensured that all safeguarding arrangements are fit for purpose, and that records are detailed and of high quality. Leaders ensure that staff receive regular training, and that designated leaders hold relevant qualifications. Parents, staff and pupils are united in their view that pupils are safe in school. There are well-planned opportunities for pupils to learn to keep themselves safe, including e-safety. As a result, pupils have a good understanding of the risks associated with accessing or sharing information online. Almost all pupils are confident that any concerns about bullying will be followed up rapidly and effectively. Staff take an active approach to safeguarding, following up concerns swiftly. Leaders ensure that they seek the right advice when necessary and do all they can to enable pupils and their families to receive the support they need from other agencies.

Inspection findings

- During this inspection, we looked closely at specific aspects of the school's provision, including: the effectiveness of safeguarding arrangements; pupils' achievements in mathematics; and the achievement of disadvantaged pupils and the most able pupils.
- Pupils speak positively about their learning experiences and life at the school. This is because there is a great deal of high-quality teaching within the school. Teachers regularly assess the progress pupils are making and plan tasks that are well matched to pupils' starting points. During activities, teachers check carefully pupils' depth of understanding, appropriately readjusting activities if required. For example, during the inspection, pupils in all year groups were working on different challenges in mathematics lessons. Teachers and teaching assistants monitored whether the tasks were too hard or too easy for individual pupils, providing support or moving pupils on to the next level accordingly.
- A review of pupils' work with English and mathematics teams showed that teaching focused on increased stretch and challenge in both mathematics and writing. This has enabled the most able pupils in Years 2 and 6 to reach a higher standard. Feedback meets leaders' expectations consistently, urging pupils to think more deeply about their work and to take responsibility for improving it themselves, with teachers' support. Pupils respond with enthusiasm by correcting work, including spellings, and also by explaining their thinking, when asked to do so.
- The pupil premium team members are determined to do all they can to ensure that the needs of disadvantaged pupils are met. The specialist teacher carefully identifies the barriers experienced by some disadvantaged pupils and sets out to address them. Examples include providing additional learning support for reading and numeracy, commissioning speech and language therapy, and arranging counselling. She has also raised the expectations of staff and the aspirations of the pupils and their families. Regular monitoring shows improved performance by disadvantaged pupils, but leaders do not track disadvantaged pupils' progress from their starting points to compare results with those of pupils who have the

same starting points nationally.

- Leaders and teachers seek new ideas by visiting other schools and have set up an informal local partnership. They experience useful challenge and support from colleagues in partner schools, including when moderating pupils' work. Swiss Gardens Primary School will benefit further from this partnership if there is honest and forthright evaluation of each other's leadership, rigorous challenge and expert support.

Next steps for the school

Leaders and those responsible for governance should ensure that:

- the school's self-evaluation is sharper and focuses on the impact of actions, for example by analysing the difference that additional funding makes to accelerating the progress of disadvantaged pupils
- improvement planning sets precise success criteria and milestones for pupils' progress, particularly for groups of pupils, including the most able, disadvantaged pupils, and pupils who have special educational needs and/or disabilities.

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

Theresa Phillips
Her Majesty's Inspector

Information about the inspection

I met with you, your deputy headteacher, your inclusion manager, the pupil premium teacher, subject leaders, teachers of English and mathematics, and three governors, including the chair and vice-chair. I visited classes across all year groups in the school with you or your deputy headteacher. I reviewed samples of pupils' work across key stages 1 and 2. I considered 34 responses by staff to Ofsted's online survey. I took careful account of 156 responses from parents to Ofsted's online questionnaire, Parent View, including free-text comments and one letter, and conversations with parents picking up their children at the end of the school day. I spoke with pupils during playtime and reviewed 75 responses by pupils to Ofsted's online survey. I looked at documents, including: the school's self-evaluation and improvement plans; information about pupils' learning and progress; minutes of meetings; and records regarding safeguarding.