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Ms Kate Luxford  
Headteacher  
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Dear Ms Luxford

### **Short inspection of Sandown School**

Following my visit to the school on 21 November 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 March 2013.

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

The leadership team has maintained the good quality of education in the school since the last inspection. You and your team continue to demonstrate high levels of commitment to the pupils of Sandown School. You are determined that the school continues to improve, by moving forward and going from strength to strength. Your commitment to the professional development of staff is evident in the creation of the leadership passport. In addition, the school's work with the Deal Learning Alliance has shaped a school community in which everyone is striving for the highest standards. Pupils, too, are very much a part of the team. They are involved in lesson observations and development planning. As a result, the sense of purpose and the focus on learning are palpable throughout the school.

Pupils think that their school is amazing. They relish the myriad of exciting additional opportunities provided by the drama work, the green zone and whole-school learning weeks. Pupils feel valued at school. They enjoy the relationships they have with adults, whom pupils describe as, 'kind but strict', telling me, 'You can have a laugh with them.' They know that their voice is valued and heard, both through the pupil-voice leaders, and through everyday dialogue with the many adults who care for them.

Parents are supportive of the school: 96% of those who responded to the Ofsted questionnaire, Parent View, would recommend the school. Comments such as, 'My child never moans about going to school because she loves it', and, 'He comes back happy' were typical of those received. Parents value the effective communication

provided by the school. For example, a parent of a child in Reception Year told me that as a result of using the assessment-sharing system, she 'knew what her daughter had done at school before she got home'. This parent went on to say that after she had uploaded a clip of a shared reading session at home, the teacher was able to give her some useful tips. In this way, parents and staff work together to develop pupils' learning effectively.

Governance is strong. Governors, together with other senior leaders, are highly skilled and all contribute to the monitoring of the school's effectiveness. There is a strong sense of teamwork, and a clear understanding of roles and responsibilities. Governors have a good understanding of the strengths of the school, and are aware of the next steps needed in the ongoing, shared drive for improvement.

You have maintained and built upon the strengths identified at the last inspection, and have addressed the areas for improvement effectively. Pupils' attainment in reading, writing and mathematics at the end of key stage 1 and key stage 2 is in line with or above that seen nationally. Most pupils achieve the standards expected for their age and make strong progress from their starting points. Work around the school shows that pupils write with flair and accuracy for a range of purposes. Pupils achieve particularly well in reading. You are justifiably proud of the fluency and love pupils bring to their reading. They are inspired by their teachers, peers and regular visits from authors. You have ensured that a sharp focus on phonics equips pupils with a secure grounding in skills, and the reading-rich ethos of the school then does the rest. You are not complacent, however. You aspire to even greater achievement with more pupils so that more pupils attain the higher standards across the curriculum, especially in mathematics. You rightly recognise that while pupils are competent mathematicians with proficient number skills, there is more to be done to further develop their mathematical reasoning and problem-solving skills.

### **Safeguarding is effective.**

The leadership team has ensured that all safeguarding arrangements are fit for purpose. Processes and systems for recruitment are clear, follow guidelines and are appropriately documented. Governors fulfil their safeguarding responsibilities and monitor procedures effectively.

All staff are vigilant in their monitoring of pupils' well-being. You know your pupils well, so any change that might suggest a concern about a pupil's well-being or safety is quickly noticed and explored. Good relationships and a personalised approach ensure that pupils' needs are known, and families who require a little help, from time to time, get the necessary support. Because pupils have such a strong voice in the school, they are confident in speaking out if they have concerns or worries. They know that they will be listened to. Pupils have a good knowledge of how to keep themselves safe, including awareness of internet safety.

## Inspection findings

- During this inspection, we looked closely at specific aspects of the school's provision, including: the effectiveness of safeguarding arrangements; pupils' attendance; the achievement of disadvantaged pupils; the achievement of the most able pupils; and the effectiveness of the teaching of mathematics.
- Leaders' actions have ensured that pupils' attendance has improved, with most pupils attending school regularly. The few complex cases where attendance is problematic are supported appropriately both within school and by referrals to other agencies when needed.
- Leaders have a good understanding of the needs of disadvantaged pupils, and track their progress regularly and carefully. Across the school, this tracking information indicates that most current disadvantaged pupils make at least the same, and in reading and writing often more, progress than their peers from their starting points. As a result, attainment gaps are closing. This is seen in the work in pupils' books, particularly in their writing.
- In 2017, the proportion of disadvantaged children attaining a good level of development at the end of Reception Year was unusually low. However, most children made strong progress from their starting points. The disadvantaged children currently in Reception Year are making good progress because they are well supported by both the stimulating learning environment and highly skilled staff.
- The proportion of pupils attaining greater depth at the end of key stage 1 was below that seen nationally in 2017. Although at the end of key stage 2, more pupils attained the higher standards than seen nationally, fewer disadvantaged pupils attained the higher standards in reading and writing than pupils did nationally. Because of this, we looked closely together at the current progress of the most able pupils. I heard a group of pupils read and looked at the work in their books. Pupils read with flair, accuracy and understanding. They were able to explain their author preferences, with David Walliams and Roald Dahl remaining firm favourites. Reading and writing comprehension is further extended through a rich vein of drama that supports their understanding of character. For example, in Year 6 pupils were hot-seating the character Rose Blanche, from their focus text, to develop their understanding of her motivation effectively. Classrooms are writing-rich environments from Reception Year to Year 6. As a result, writing extension activities are plentiful and current pupils, including the most able disadvantaged, are making good progress.
- While most pupils attained at least the expected standard in mathematics at the end of both key stages 1 and 2, in 2017, work in pupils' books shows a lack of consistently high mathematical achievement. While pupils are proficient in basic number operations, opportunities are often missed to apply these skills. Too often, pupils' answers are not sufficiently developed to challenge and extend their mathematical thinking. Work in other curriculum areas such as science shows that there are missed opportunities, when pupils could use mathematics to answer questions and demonstrate their understanding.
- The mathematics leader has a clear understanding of what needs to be done to

ensure consistently high levels of mathematical achievement across the school. She is supported well by leaders. There is an appetite for this improvement, and recent training and initiatives have already started to have an impact in some year groups.

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

Leaders and those responsible for governance should ensure that:

- teachers have high expectations of what each pupil can achieve in mathematics, and are particularly aspirational for the most able
- teaching of mathematics provides regular opportunities for pupils to apply mathematical reasoning and solve problems
- mathematics is developed across the wider curriculum in a meaningful way.

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

Yours sincerely

Deborah Gordon  
**Ofsted Inspector**

### **Information about the inspection**

I met with you, members of the governing body, staff and a representative from the local authority. I reviewed documentation, including information about pupils' achievement, the school improvement plan, and safeguarding checks, policies and procedures. I observed pupils around the school and in their classes. Together, we visited all classes. In the classes, I observed teaching, looked at books and spoke to pupils about their work. I met with four pupils to get their views of the school. I took account of parents' views in the playground in the morning, and considered 141 responses to Ofsted's online questionnaire, Parent View, including 32 free-text comments.