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Mrs Debbie Crossingham
Headteacher
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Dear Mrs Crossingham

Short inspection of Westdene Primary School

Following my visit to the school on 22 November 2017 with Jon Hills, 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 June 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 have built a strong, ambitious leadership team that has created a culture of high expectations of teaching and pupils' achievement. This is central to the school's continual drive for improvement. Leaders never rest on their laurels, but seek advice and expertise to sharpen their practice further. You work hard to identify future leaders and provide them with opportunities to take greater responsibility. Morale in the school is high and staff enjoy working here. This outward-looking, ambitious approach has helped the school to provide a good education for all its pupils.

Pupils are very happy and are proud to be part of this inclusive school community. Relationships are strong and pupils have complete confidence in staff to take good care of them. Pupils are polite and behave well. They get along together happily, both in class and at free times. They willingly seize the opportunities to take the many roles of responsibility that the school offers them. Parents are overwhelmingly positive about the school. One wrote: '[My children] love going to school and are both making fantastic progress thanks to the great teaching and opportunities on offer at Westdene.' This was typical of many responses that inspectors received.

Pupils achieve well because teaching is strong, providing pupils with many

interesting and challenging learning opportunities. Outcomes for pupils are consistently above those seen nationally at the end of each key stage. Pupils make good progress from their different starting points. In most year groups, disadvantaged pupils achieve as well as other pupils, because staff understand and meet their needs well.

At your last inspection you were asked to ensure that pupils had enough time to respond to teachers' feedback so they could make faster progress. Teachers comply with the school's marking policy. They ensure that pupils have regular advice on how to improve, not only in written marking, but also during conversations in lessons. This feedback also helps teachers to spot any pupils at risk of slipping behind and intervene promptly to help them to catch up quickly. Pupils value this advice and can explain clearly how they have used it to advance their learning.

Inspectors also asked you to analyse information about pupils' achievement so that you would have a fuller understanding of what the school does well and your areas for development. This awareness is now a strength of the school. Senior leaders and governors know the school well. They use pupil-progress data to evaluate the impact of school improvement plans and make any adjustments needed. Leaders and teachers are very responsive to any emerging trends, and are never afraid to make changes to their plans to bring about better outcomes for pupils. Governors have received clear training and support, so they understand how to interpret pupil-progress data for themselves. They regularly use this information to hold senior leaders to account.

Safeguarding is effective.

You have rightly placed the well-being of all pupils at the very heart of the school's work. Pupils are safe in school. One girl told inspectors, 'This school is really safe because our teachers look after us.' The leadership team has ensured that all safeguarding arrangements are fit for purpose, and records are detailed and of high quality. Senior leaders make sure that all staff and governors understand their role in keeping pupils safe. Leaders provide staff with training and regular updates as needed. Staff understand how to identify pupils who might be vulnerable, and they report these concerns promptly to senior leaders using the online reporting system.

You are keenly aware of the dangers that come with living by the sea and so you provide all pupils in key stage 2 with swimming lessons every year to help them become strong swimmers by the time they leave the school. Pupils are also well informed about staying safe in other situations, including when online.

Inspection findings

- At the start of the inspection we agreed to follow four key lines of enquiry. The first one was to explore how well teaching enables pupils to make good progress in reading and phonics in key stage 1. Outcomes in phonics at the end of Year 1 dipped sharply in 2017. However, leaders spared no effort in identifying the reasons for this decline and have learned useful lessons from it. Pupils who did

not achieve the expected standard in Year 1 have been taught well since and have quickly picked up these skills in Year 2.

- Teachers and teaching assistants have good subject knowledge that enables them to teach phonics accurately and help pupils to become capable, enthusiastic readers. Reading lessons are pitched appropriately to ensure that all pupils, including disadvantaged pupils, make good progress and are interested in their work. Pupils regularly use and apply their phonics knowledge in their writing. They do not always spell every word correctly, but having secure phonics knowledge means that your pupils are confident to have a go. As a result, they are not held back in their writing.
- Second, we explored how effectively teaching enables the most able pupils, including the most able disadvantaged pupils, to achieve the high standards of which they are capable in writing. In 2017 percentages of pupils who achieved the 'greater depth' standard in writing were lower than in reading and mathematics at the end of key stages 1 and 2. No disadvantaged pupils achieved the greater depth standard at the end of Year 6. Inspectors found clear evidence that the most able pupils are making faster progress this year, especially in key stage 1. They are starting to write at greater length, and a greater proportion are on track to achieve the higher standard, including disadvantaged pupils.
- Pupils learn to write well because teachers have high expectations and good subject knowledge. English grammar, punctuation and spelling are taught thoroughly so that pupils learn to write with a good degree of accuracy. However, although pupils have opportunities to write, these are not frequent enough. Pupils need to be provided with more opportunities to write independently, using and applying their skills in more extended tasks. Inspectors also found that pupils do not have enough opportunities to write in a range of curriculum subjects.
- We looked next at how well the wider curriculum enables pupils to achieve highly in subjects other than mathematics and English. You rightly take great pride in the varied, exciting curriculum that the school offers for pupils. Pupils talk with great enthusiasm about the many interesting visits and visitors that enhance their learning. Trips to such places as Fishbourne Roman Palace, Glyndebourne Opera and the RNL station at Shoreham all bring learning to life and contribute to pupils' positive attitudes to learning. Pupils spoke animatedly about opportunities to perform, for example singing at the Grand Hotel and performing dance at the Brighton Dome. One parent commented: 'What sets the school apart is the focus on other things as well. Our child...has been able to take advantage of numerous musical opportunities.' Parents and pupils also enthuse about the range of sports on offer, both in lessons and in clubs.
- When looking at pupils' work across the curriculum, inspectors noted that there is very little recorded work in science because it does not receive enough time in the curriculum. Not enough attention is given to developing pupils' understanding of scientific concepts or allowing them to work scientifically. There are too few opportunities for pupils to plan experiments to test out their own ideas and record their findings in a scientific way.

- Finally, we investigated the impact of leaders' actions to improve the attendance of disadvantaged pupils. Leaders leave no stone unturned in ensuring that all pupils benefit from regular attendance at school. The pupil premium manager and inclusion leader both engage with families of disadvantaged pupils and those who may be vulnerable to ensure pupils' best interests. As a result, some families who were previously reluctant to engage with the school are much more willing to ask for help and support. The attendance of disadvantaged pupils has improved so that it is in line with the attendance of other pupils nationally.

Next steps for the school

Leaders and those responsible for governance should ensure that:

- pupils, including the most able and disadvantaged pupils, are provided with regular opportunities to apply and develop their skills in a range of extended writing tasks across the curriculum
- teachers increase the depth of pupils' knowledge and understanding in science and raise expectations for the quality of pupils' written science work.

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

Yours sincerely

Bruce Waelend
Ofsted Inspector

Information about the inspection

Inspectors met with you and the deputy headteacher, other leaders and four members of the governing body, including the chair and vice-chair. An inspector had a telephone interview with a representative of the local authority. Inspectors visited classes with you or the deputy headteacher to look at teaching and learning. Together we looked at pupils' work. We observed pupils' behaviour around the school and had a meeting with a small group of pupils. Inspectors considered 35 responses to the staff survey and 196 responses to Ofsted's online questionnaire, Parent View, as well as speaking to a number of parents at the beginning of the day. Inspectors evaluated a range of documents, including the school's self-evaluation documents, the school improvement plan, minutes of governors' meetings, and safeguarding policies, procedures and checks.