

Ofsted  
Piccadilly Gate  
Store Street  
Manchester  
M1 2WD

T 0300 123 4234  
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Anne Ratsey  
Headteacher  
Southwater Junior Academy  
Worthing Road  
Southwater  
Horsham  
West Sussex  
RH13 9JH

Dear Mrs Ratsey

### **Short inspection of Southwater Junior Academy**

Following my visit to the school on 28 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 May 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 provide exceptional leadership for the school. You lead your team with good humour and quiet determination. You are very ably supported by your deputy headteacher. Together, you and your deputy headteacher have developed a knowledgeable, effective and skilful team of teachers and leaders. They share your commitment to ensuring that pupils of all abilities and backgrounds make the same strong progress.

You have steered the school through a time of rapid change in the last few years as the school has grown and expanded. Well-established policies and consistent routines have provided a secure framework for the school's work during this stage of the school's development. You and your team have maintained a purposeful, calm and welcoming atmosphere in the school. As a result, the school has continued to operate smoothly and efficiently, and teachers and pupils have been able to get on with their work with a minimum of disruption.

Pupils like school. They enjoy learning and behave well. Pupils' excellent behaviour during lessons makes a strong contribution to the quality of their work and to their progress over time. Pupils, parents and staff are all equally positive about the high standard of behaviour in the school.

The trustees have an accurate view of the school's performance. They have every confidence in your leadership and are understandably proud of the school's achievements. However, they are not complacent, and share your ambitions for the school's future. One trustee summed up the school's success and your team's determination to secure further improvements when she said, 'There's so much that's good in the school – but everyone strives to do even more.'

You have successfully addressed the key issues identified at the time of the previous inspection. The inspection team asked you to strengthen procedures to support pupils when they join the school at the start of Year 3 and to develop a broad and balanced curriculum. Since then, you have developed good links with the infant school, improved the accuracy of teachers' assessments and extended the curriculum. As a result, pupils settle more quickly into junior-school life than at the time of the previous inspection, enjoy learning and make strong progress.

The inspection team also asked you to improve the teaching of spelling. You and your team have improved the quality of English teaching, including the teaching of grammar, punctuation and spelling skills. As a result, pupils make better progress in reading, and the quality of pupils' written work has improved. However, you have rightly identified that pupils need to use their grammar, punctuation and spelling skills more consistently in their writing, and develop a fluent handwriting style, if they are to achieve the highest standards in English.

### **Safeguarding is effective.**

You and your team put pupils' safety at the centre of the school's work. You take your responsibilities for safeguarding very seriously and act swiftly and decisively wherever you have any queries about pupils' welfare. You and your team work closely and effectively with agencies and with parents to ensure pupils' well-being.

You and your leadership team ensure that all safeguarding arrangements are fit for purpose so that pupils are secure. The school is well organised and efficiently maintained so that pupils can learn and play safely. You provide staff, parents and visitors with good-quality information about the school's safeguarding procedures, including clear advice about what to do should they have any concerns about pupils' safety. You and the trustees regularly check policies and review procedures so that the school is safe.

### **Inspection findings**

- During the inspection, I focused particularly on:
  - the quality of pupils' learning in reading and writing
  - how well transition and assessment procedures ensure that pupils get off to a good start in Year 3
  - how effectively leaders enable pupils to learn a broad and balanced range of subjects
  - how well leaders ensure that pupils are safe and attend well.

- Teachers are knowledgeable about teaching English. They plan activities which build well on pupils' learning, and use questioning effectively during lessons to check and extend pupils' understanding. Good-quality teaching across the school ensures that all groups of pupils make strong progress in reading and writing.
- The quality of pupils' written work has improved since the previous inspection and standards are rising in all year groups. However, the clarity and fluency of pupils' written work is sometimes hampered by poor handwriting.
- Improvements in the teaching of spelling, grammar and punctuation skills since the previous inspection ensure that pupils have a good knowledge of the technical aspects of writing. In 2017, the proportion of pupils achieving high standards in the grammar and punctuation test at the end of Year 6 was above the national average. However, while pupils can explain when and how to use the technical aspects of writing, and do so correctly in exercises and tests, they do not make sufficient use of them when writing more widely.
- The introduction of a more systematic approach to the teaching of reading skills means that pupils learn how to read a wide range of books confidently. Effective support for pupils who need extra help with their reading when they join Year 3, including additional phonics teaching, ensures that they catch up quickly. An increase in the range of high-quality books available for pupils mean that they are more engaged with reading than previously. The recent refurbishment of the school library provides a welcoming and stimulating area for pupils to enjoy a book.
- Leaders have developed positive and constructive links with the infant school. Closer links mean that teachers have a much clearer view of pupils' needs when they join the school in Year 3. Parents are very happy about the way their children settle into junior school.
- Leaders have established a rigorous set of assessments which provides a full and accurate view of pupils' abilities when starting in Year 3. This enables leaders to put in prompt support for those pupils who have gaps in their learning, as well as for those who have additional needs. Teachers make good use of comprehensive assessment information to plan learning. As a result, pupils get off to a good start in Year 3.
- Leaders ensure that pupils have opportunities to develop interests and skills across a wide range of subjects. Subjects such as music, physical education and French are given equally high priority. High-quality work evident throughout the school, such as the artwork in displays and in pupils' art and topic books, reflects teachers' strong subject expertise. An impressive range of clubs appeals to pupils' interests and gives them plenty of opportunities to try something new. The school's broad and balanced curriculum helps pupils to develop preferences and skills which contribute to their enjoyment of learning in school and at home. Pupils are keen to find out more about the world around them and are well prepared for life in modern Britain.
- Leaders work well with parents and agencies to support pupils' attendance and well-being. They check pupils' attendance closely and contact parents quickly if they have any concerns. All groups of pupils attend school regularly.

## **Next steps for the school**

Leaders and those responsible for governance should ensure that pupils:

- use grammar, punctuation and spelling skills consistently well in their written work
- develop a consistent handwriting style so that they write more fluently.

I am copying this letter to the chair of the executive board, 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

Julie Sackett  
**Ofsted Inspector**

## **Information about the inspection**

I visited seven classes with you during the inspection. I looked at pupils' workbooks during lessons, as well as reviewing a sample of their work separately with your English and mathematics leader. I talked with pupils in the playground and in the classrooms.

I met with you and your deputy headteacher during the inspection. I also met with the five trustees, including the chair of the executive board. I spoke with a local authority representative by telephone. I took account of 73 responses to Ofsted's online questionnaire, Parent View, and spoke with parents informally at the start of the school day. I considered 50 responses to Ofsted's online staff questionnaire and 102 responses to Ofsted's pupil questionnaire. I reviewed the school's website and considered a range of documents, including your summary of the school's effectiveness, the school's improvement plan and external reports about the school's performance. I also looked at documents about safeguarding and considered information about pupils' attendance.