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12 February 2018

Mr David Sherhod  
Acting Executive Headteacher  
Plaxtol Primary School  
School Lane  
Plaxtol  
Sevenoaks  
Kent  
TN15 0QD

Dear Mr Sherhod

### **Short inspection of Plaxtol Primary School**

Following my visit to the school on 1 February 2018, 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 January 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 been acting executive headteacher since the beginning of the spring term. The local authority and staff value the stability you have brought to the school in a very short period of time. Staff are relishing the clarity you bring. They feel that you trust them to take greater ownership of what happens in the classroom while recognising your clear expectations. Staff appreciate the care you have shown towards their well-being and workload.

The school has experienced a lot of change in the last 18 months. There have been significant changes in staff in a short period of time. As a result, more than a third of parents do not feel that the school has been well led and managed over time. Staff are positive about working in the school now and have a great team ethic. Staff and parents recognise and value the hard work of the assistant headteacher since the headteacher has been absent.

The local authority acted swiftly to support the school during the substantive headteacher's absence. You have wasted no time in getting a full understanding about what the school is doing well and what it needs to do to be even better. For example, you have identified that there is some inconsistency in the progress that current key stage 2 pupils are making in mathematics. You have clear plans to improve this but have not had the time to take this work forward. You have also recognised that the most able pupils in Year 1 could make even better progress in their writing.

At the time of the last inspection, leaders were asked to raise reading standards at the end of Year 2. This has happened. For the last four years, almost every pupil has met the expected standard in the Year 1 phonics check. In 2016 the proportion of Year 2 pupils reading at greater depth was the same as those found nationally. In 2017, the proportion of pupils reaching the higher standard increased to be above national figures.

Plaxtol is a small and happy place to learn. Pupils enjoy coming to school and behave well in lessons and at breaktimes. The oldest pupils are given a wealth of responsibilities and this has a positive impact on their personal development.

### **Safeguarding is effective.**

The interim leadership team has ensured that all safeguarding arrangements are fit for purpose. You have strengthened the school's work to safeguard pupils. You have unerring clarity about safe staff recruitment and the government's requirements for checks on all adults who work with pupils. As a result, you have quickly improved the administrative procedures for making the right checks and storing that information on a single central record.

There is a strong culture in the school of listening to pupils. Consequently, if pupils share their concerns or worries, staff diligently record and report these to senior staff. Leaders make informed decisions about what to do about these concerns. All communications with other agencies, such as social care, are carefully recorded. Over time, leaders have made appropriate and swift referrals to the designated officer who works for the local authority and acted upon guidance they received.

### **Inspection findings**

- During this inspection I evaluated: the progress that key stage 2 pupils are making in mathematics; the progress that pupils in key stage 1 and the early years make in their writing; the impact of extra-curricular activities on pupils' personal development and welfare; the roles and responsibilities that older pupils have in the school and the impact these have on their personal and social development.
- Over time, key stage 2 pupils have not made the same progress in mathematics as they have in English. In 2017, pupils at the end of Year 6 made significantly less progress than other pupils nationally with the same starting points. Current key stage 2 pupils are making better progress. Pupils in Years 3 and 4 are making good progress in mathematics. Pupils in Years 5 and 6 are making variable progress. They are not developing their problem-solving and reasoning skills well enough.
- Children in the early years make good progress in their literacy. Assessment information is accurate about children's strong starting points. The few children who do not start school with the knowledge and skills they may typically be expected to have for their age, make very good progress.

- Year 1 pupils who met the early learning goals at the end of their Reception Year make good progress in writing. Pupils use and apply their phonic knowledge well in their writing and quickly improve their spelling and punctuation. The most able pupils in Year 1 could make even greater progress in their writing. Planned learning through the autumn term did not build well enough on what those pupils could do at the end of the Reception Year.
- Your school provides pupils with a wealth of extra activities before school, at lunchtime and after school. Governors have ensured that additional sport premium funding is well used. Over time, leaders have sought to provide a richer range of clubs and have used the additional government funding to subsidise their costs. Pupils value the opportunities they have to compete against other schools and dance at local theatres. They talk of their growing confidence, the opportunities to make friends with children from other schools and the importance of getting fit.
- Older pupils play a significant role in supporting younger pupils at Plaxtol. They help readers, offer support at breaktimes and provide a friendly face on the school gate in the morning to help any nervous or shy pupils settle into school. Pupil councillors recall how their suggested improvements to the outside spaces and resources were acted on, and the role they have played in staff recruitment. Older pupils thrive on what they see as the 'authority and responsibility'. They are given a wide range of meaningful special jobs and like being able to talk with and be treated like adults. Pupils feel that their additional responsibilities are helping them prepare well for Year 7.

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

Leaders and those responsible for governance should ensure that:

- the oldest pupils get greater opportunities to develop their mathematical problem-solving and reasoning skills
- the most able Year 1 pupils make even better progress in their writing.

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

Yours sincerely

Mark Cole  
**Her Majesty's Inspector**

## **Information about the inspection**

I met with you and governors to review your evaluation of the school's effectiveness. I accompanied you to all classes and we undertook a scrutiny of pupils' work. I met a representative of the local authority. I spoke to pupils at breaktime and during a meeting. I met a group of staff and reviewed five staff questionnaires. I scrutinised 59 responses to the online questionnaire, Parent View, and free-text comments. I met some parents during the inspection. I checked the effectiveness of your safeguarding arrangements, including those related to recruitment.