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Mr Ben Cooper  
Headteacher  
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Dear Mr Cooper

### **Short inspection of Swalecliffe Community Primary School**

Following my visit to the school on 31 January 2018 with Helen Tait, 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 provide strong, effective and inspiring leadership for the school. Together with governors and staff you and your senior leadership team are ambitious and determined to provide the best learning experiences for pupils. You and your deputy headteacher have a good understanding of the strengths of the school and the areas that need to improve. This is a result of your careful checks on pupils' achievement and the quality of teaching and learning. You have identified, correctly, further work to be done to develop subject-leadership skills. You have plans in place to ensure that subject leaders' work has a greater impact on improving teaching and learning and pupils' outcomes and that it makes the most of their subject expertise.

You have maintained and built on the strengths identified at the previous inspection, and have addressed the areas that were identified for improvement. Pupils' progress in mathematics has improved year by year. In 2017, it was much closer to progress in reading and writing than had previously been the case. Progress for pupils currently in the school is now broadly similar in reading, writing and mathematics. You are, correctly, aware that pupils' mathematical reasoning skills are not as strong as other aspects. You need to strengthen this aspect of mathematics to improve standards and develop pupils' depth of knowledge, skills and understanding.

You have successfully ensured that there is consistent assessment practice across

the school which is linked to your learning policy. As a result, pupils are increasingly successful learners who develop skills of independence, reflection, resilience and collaboration. You have focused intensely on the progress of disadvantaged pupils, and many of this group currently in the school are making good progress from their starting points.

Staff morale is high and noted by parents. One commented: 'The staff at the school always seem happy and have a real team spirit. The "front of house" office staff are exemplary, always friendly, professional and extremely helpful.'

Parents are very positive about all that the school offers their children. They are confident in your leadership. Parents are particularly pleased with your visibility and accessibility. They appreciate the fact that you not only know the names of all of the pupils but know them as individuals too. As one parent wrote: 'The headteacher is a fantastic leader and works extremely hard. He is always present in the school and is well known to parents and children.' The overwhelming majority of parents who completed Ofsted's online questionnaire, Parent View, agree that their children are happy at school and well looked after.

Pupils enjoy coming to school, are happy, work hard and want to do well. They have good attitudes to learning and are proud of their school. They are well behaved, polite and kind to each other. They learn in a calm, safe, welcoming and friendly environment. One parent echoed the views of many with the comment: 'This is a wonderful school and my child, now in Year 6, has made really excellent progress. I trust the teachers and all the staff who are making great efforts to put children's welfare and learning first. They listen to any concerns from children and take parents really seriously. My child feels happy and safe in this school.'

### **Safeguarding is effective.**

Leaders make sure that all safeguarding procedures are fit for purpose. There are well-understood systems in place to manage safeguarding requirements. There is a culture of safeguarding at the school and the safety and welfare of pupils has a high profile. This is demonstrated to good effect by the creation of a specific well-being team and a full-time family learning teacher. Staff know the pupils well, are vigilant in raising any concerns and know the procedures to follow.

The deputy headteacher is the main designated safeguarding lead and two other members of staff have also been trained in this role. They ensure that all staff receive regular and appropriate training in keeping children safe from a variety of risks, including those related to online safety. Leaders act swiftly when necessary and liaise well with outside agencies to ensure that pupils in need receive timely and effective support.

A very large majority of staff, and almost all parents who responded to Ofsted's online survey, Parent View, feel that pupils are safe in school. One parent wrote: 'The school has a happy and calm atmosphere where children feel safe and learn.' Pupils say they feel safe and that they are confident to talk to adults in school if

they have any problems.

## **Inspection findings**

- At the start of the inspection, we agreed to focus on: pupils' progress in mathematics; the achievement of different groups, particularly that of disadvantaged pupils; how well the curriculum supports the learning of all groups; and the effectiveness of safeguarding.
- In 2017, the proportion of pupils that reached the expected standard in reading, writing and mathematics by the end of Year 2 and Year 6 was above that found nationally. The proportion reaching the higher level in the three subjects was above the national figure at the end of Year 6 and similar to that found nationally by the end of Year 2. Pupils' overall progress was similar to that found nationally.
- Pupils' progress in mathematics has been improving steadily over the past three years. You have taken a range of successful actions to bring this about. Pupils now make a similar level of progress in mathematics as they do in reading and writing. We agreed, however, that fluency in arithmetic is the strongest aspect, problem-solving is improving but reasoning is not yet as strong.
- You have ensured that there are robust procedures to check on the progress and attainment of each individual and different groups of pupils. Additional funding is spent effectively, and extra support is carefully monitored to ensure that it is making a difference. As a result of your determined and ongoing focus on this group, disadvantaged pupils currently in the school are making rapid and sometimes faster progress than others. Although gaps in their attainment remain, the differences when compared to others are diminishing.
- You have ensured that there is a broad, balanced and vibrant curriculum. It effectively meets the needs as well as the interests of all groups of pupils. A parent commented: 'The school and staff take into consideration the interests and needs of my child. Learning is made fun and relevant so that it is memorable for my children.' Work is linked across subjects, to ensure that learning is meaningful and relevant and includes challenges and life skills. You continually review the curriculum to adapt and modify it where appropriate, as demonstrated by the changes you made to the science curriculum. The arts, music and sports have a high profile in the school, and pupils show impressive skills in a range of activities. The curriculum is enriched through visits to places of educational interest, and visitors to school, as well as access to a good range of clubs which are appreciated by pupils and parents. One parent commented: 'The range of clubs run is also great and provides something of interest for every child.'
- Assessments ensure that teachers know how well all groups are achieving in all subjects. Subject leaders have good knowledge and expertise in their subjects. The inspectors agree with your plan to develop subject leadership skills so that there is greater impact on pupils' achievement across all subjects.

## **Next steps for the school**

Leaders and those responsible for governance should ensure that:

- pupils' mathematical reasoning skills improve
- subject leadership is strengthened so that it is consistently effective in improving the quality of teaching and learning and pupils' outcomes.

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

Margaret Coussins  
**Ofsted Inspector**

### **Information about the inspection**

The inspectors met with you, the deputy headteacher, and other senior leaders in the school. The lead inspector met with four governors, including the chair and the vice-chair of the governing body. An inspector met with a local authority adviser. You or your deputy headteacher accompanied the inspectors on their visits to classes. During these visits, the inspectors spoke to pupils about their learning and looked at their work. Inspectors also observed pupils in the playground and met with a group of pupils to ask them for their views on their school. Inspectors reviewed the school's website and sampled a range of documents and records including: information about pupils' achievement; leaders' checks on the quality of teaching; the school improvement plan; your own evaluation of the school's effectiveness; and documents relating to safeguarding. We took into account 114 responses to Ofsted's online survey, Parent View, including 72 free-text comments, and spoke to some parents at the start of the school day. We also considered 64 responses to Ofsted's staff survey and 262 responses to the pupil survey.