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Sarah Dukelow  
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Dear Miss Dukelow

### **Short inspection of Alresford 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 July 2014.

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

The leadership team has maintained the good quality of education in the school since the last inspection.

Since taking up post as headteacher in September 2017, you have established a clear and accurate understanding of the school's performance. Consequently, your school improvement plan is focused on the right priorities and you have set an ambitious programme to develop the school and raise achievement further. You are determined in particular to extend pupils who have the capability to achieve the higher standards while ensuring that lower-attaining pupils and those who have special educational needs (SEN) and/or disabilities also achieve their very best.

The staff are right behind you because you have created a good sense of team and ensured that all are working towards commonly understood goals and aims. These are underpinned by high expectations of pupils' achievements.

The school environment is warm and inclusive. As one parent commented: 'Particularly positive is how inclusive the school is across the year groups. I am impressed that the different age groups seem to interact effortlessly with one another.' Pupils who join midway through their primary education said that they are welcomed and that it does not take them long to make new friends. This is because others are so welcoming and friendly. Pupils are polite and behave well in and out of lessons. They are reflective and considerate of others including those who come from backgrounds different from their own. They feel very well supported in school.

The school has improved well since its previous inspection. Pupils are now practising writing more frequently in lessons and regularly producing extended pieces of work in English that are usually of good quality. However, this is not the case in other subjects. The school is communicating with parents and carers better with regular newsletters and an open approach to dealing with any issues that arise. Most parents agree that they are receiving useful information about their child's progress.

Through the partnership with local schools, you and your staff are now sharing practice and learning from that of others in the partnership, as well as routinely sharing good practice within your own school. This contributes well to the consistent approach to planning and teaching we saw across the school. You and your senior leaders are providing good support to develop teaching, especially to teachers new to the school or new to teaching, and staff benefit from good-quality continuing professional development.

Governors provide a clear direction for the school's future development. They visit the school regularly to find out for themselves how well it is working and receive good-quality information from you and other leaders before their meetings. Consequently, governors understand the school's strengths and weaknesses well and check how successfully priorities for improvement are being tackled.

Most parents who responded to Ofsted's online questionnaire, Parent View, are happy with the school. The majority of those who responded in writing are fulsome in their praise of the quality of education the school provides.

In lessons, pupils are fully engaged in their work. They are keen to learn and enjoy their time in school. Children in the early years get a good start to their education. The indoor and outdoor areas are well developed to support the development of children's early learning skills.

Pupils are largely making good progress in English and mathematics. However, as we agreed, there is further work to do to enable more pupils to achieve the higher standards, especially by the end of key stage 2.

### **Safeguarding is effective.**

You know your pupils and their families extremely well. You and your staff know the signs to look out for that could indicate that a pupil or family need extra support. Pupils spoke highly of the support they receive to deal with any concerns they might have, so that they can focus on lessons and their work better. The daily staff briefings are used highly effectively to share appropriate information more widely and ensure that staff remain watchful. They receive a clear message: that no concern is too small to report. This helps to create a strong culture of care and vigilance.

The school carries out all the required recruitment and other checks to ensure that anyone working at the school, or indeed visiting, is safe to work with children. You

maintain good records of any concerns and do not hesitate to contact other agencies, such as social care or health professionals, when you feel they need to get involved. The leadership team has ensured that all safeguarding arrangements are fit for purpose.

### **Inspection findings**

- In the national curriculum tests at the end of key stage 2 in 2017, pupils did not do as well in writing as in reading and mathematics. You and your leaders have focused on improving the quality of writing across the school, including in key stage 2. Pupils' books show that they are developing a good vocabulary and are consistently applying grammar and punctuation to their writing. Leaders check English books and observe teaching regularly, then provide helpful feedback to teachers. Teachers work with one another, and increasingly with teachers in other schools, to compare how accurately they are assessing pupils' work. Consequently, they are more accurate in judging how well pupils are performing.
- From your own monitoring, you have identified that handwriting is an issue and that many pupils find it difficult to write clearly and legibly. While you are providing support for individual pupils to improve their handwriting, you are aware that there is no systematic approach to teaching handwriting across the school. Plans are being drawn up to address this.
- Teachers are providing pupils with work that is set at a range of different levels, especially in mathematics through the 'chilli challenges', and this helps to extend the most able pupils. The work on Macbeth in Year 6 was providing pupils with excellent opportunities to think in depth about character and motivation, and pupils relished the challenge. However, we also saw evidence of pupils finding work easy or being given work that lacked enough challenge, especially in key stage 1 and lower key stage 2. Pupils said that they do not always feel that work makes them think deeply enough.
- The school provides a broad and balanced curriculum, and pupils cover a good range of topics in subjects such as science, history and geography. Visits and visitors enrich the school's curriculum and make it more interesting for pupils and children in the early years. A recent change in provider for physical education (PE) has resulted in pupils' experiencing a much wider range of sports and physical activities, including fencing.
- Books and discussions with pupils indicate that the curriculum does not provide sufficient depth of learning. Pupils develop their knowledge well across different subjects, and skills are well developed in some, such as art and PE. However, in subjects such as science, history, geography and religious education, they are not developing their depth of understanding consistently well as they move through the school. In Years 3 to 4, pupils compared houses in Tudor times to those of today, which provided opportunities for developing deeper learning and skills, such as those needed to become more critical thinkers and to be more analytical. This type of practice is not consistent enough. Nor are such skills reflected regularly enough in their written work across the curriculum.
- You are actively developing the roles of all subject leaders so that they are able

to work as effectively as leaders in English and mathematics, to drive the developments needed across the curriculum. Subject leaders are enthusiastic and keen to take on more responsibility. While their roles are developing well, they are still at the early stages of development.

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

Leaders and those responsible for governance should ensure that:

- plans for a more systematic approach to teaching handwriting are implemented quickly and pupils' handwriting improves
- pupils are challenged and extended in English and mathematics so that more achieve the higher standards
- subject leaders develop their roles fully so they can drive the improvements needed to enable pupils to develop deeper understanding and a wider range of skills.

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

Yours sincerely

Gulshanbir Kayembe  
**Ofsted Inspector**

### **Information about the inspection**

During the inspection, I held meetings with you, other school leaders, three governors, including the chair, and pupils. I held a telephone conversation with a representative of the local authority. We visited classrooms across all key stages together and looked at pupils' work in their books. I examined a range of documents, policies and assessment information. I took account of the Ofsted online questionnaire responses from 21 parents, as well as 12 written responses from parents. In addition, I considered 15 staff responses and 27 pupil responses to Ofsted surveys.