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Dear Mrs Titley

Short inspection of Funtington Primary School

Following my visit to the school on 22 March 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 September 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 and your staff team took immediate and decisive action following the disappointing end-of-key-stage results in 2017. You have rightly identified that pupils who join the school in Reception and then stay through to the end of Year 6 make good progress. However, you are concerned about pupils who join at different times and have gaps in their learning. You are acutely conscious of the very small numbers of pupils in each cohort and of how these factors may make judgements about progress unreliable. Nevertheless, you have made no excuses for the 2017 outcomes. You and your team are adamant that every pupil counts, deserves to reach their potential and must not be left behind. You told me, 'We're not wobbling on this; we've got to get results.'

Compassion and quiet determination characterise your leadership of the school. Through these qualities, you have won the loyalty and commitment of staff, who share your resolve to raise standards and work together productively as a team. Plans to improve the school are focused on exactly the right priorities. You have shrewdly made sure that all actions that you take are judged by their impact on pupils' progress and attainment. All leaders, governors and teachers are crystal clear about the goals for the school and are not losing any time in bringing about improvement.

Governors have also taken prompt action to tackle the school's urgent priorities. They reviewed their own skills and made the most of additional training to sharpen

the impact they make. Governors have made it their business to get to grips with the new system of assessment in the school. They ask difficult questions, and are not afraid to push for speedier improvement in order to make a difference. West Sussex local authority has also stepped in, in good time, by arranging support from a local teaching schools alliance.

With such a close and determined focus on raising standards in writing and mathematics, it is not surprising that your assessments and pupils' work now demonstrate good progress in reading, writing and mathematics. Pupils' attainment is on track to be in line with or above national figures.

Pupils at your school have so much potential to do well. Whether they are learning new sounds in a well-planned phonics session, carefully practising a special sentence about being an invisible superhero, or talking about their books, pupils are eager to learn and diligent. They are also respectful and thoughtful. I was particularly impressed with their superb behaviour in the assembly I observed. Pupils led the first part of the assembly with confidence and ease. They then watched a film about children in Johannesburg, with rapt attention, before jumping up to practise their 'Sport Relief' song, with accompanying actions excellently modelled by older pupils. Such openness to teamwork, respect for each other and a positive attitude to new learning typify pupils' attitudes throughout the school. Your pupils eagerly approach each task with enthusiasm, want to explore and ask questions, and are rightly proud of their conscientiously presented work.

Parents and carers appreciate the caring and nurturing ethos of the school. They also value the way that the school promotes the importance of keeping fit and being healthy. Many parents are pleased with the progress their children are making, particularly in reading and in their behaviour and manners. One parent commented on the 'polite and well-rounded' pupils in the school. Another said, 'I feel grateful every day that my child has such a great school to attend.'

Leaders and staff have maintained the strengths in teaching, learning and assessment, including the teaching of reading, since the last inspection. Pupils' behaviour and personal development continue to be a notable strength of the school. You have made sure that teachers' questioning challenges pupils. In addition, teachers now routinely share their planning in English, mathematics and across the curriculum. Teachers and support staff also visit other year groups and phases in order to develop their understanding of what pupils have already learned and how to ensure good progress.

Leaders, staff and governors know that more pupils need to reach national expectations and are conscious of the challenges faced when many pupils join the school at different times. In addition, you have correctly identified that the most able pupils need to be challenged more and achieve higher standards. Through your analysis of most-able pupils' writing, you have noted that there are lingering weaknesses in spelling and that pupils' vocabulary needs to be extended.

Safeguarding is effective.

Leaders and governors have ensured that all safeguarding arrangements are fit for purpose and meet statutory requirements. You and your senior leader have had the required training as designated safeguarding leads (DSLs). You have made sure that all staff have had comprehensive training to help them recognise signs of abuse and pupils at risk of harm. The vice-chair of the governing body is a safeguarding trainer and takes responsibility for overseeing all procedures and practice in the school.

Staff know exactly what to do if they are worried about a pupil. There is a secure system for reporting concerns. Careful records are maintained of the school's follow-up action and communication with other agencies that protect children. You are wisely tenacious in pursuing concerns with the local authority in order to make sure that the right protection and support are in place for children and families. Pupils' safety and care are at the heart of the school's values, and a spirit of watchfulness is evident in all areas.

The school's child and family liaison support worker offers valuable extra help for parents and pupils who may be struggling.

Pupils feel safe in the nurturing and supportive atmosphere of the school. They look out for each other and have trusted adults that they can talk to. Care is taken of pupils' use of the internet during the school day, and they are provided with guidance for safety when online at home. Parents are confident that the school is safe and that pupils are cared for well. Some parents commented on the extra care and support that they and their children received when life became difficult.

Inspection findings

- During the inspection, we focused on the following specific aspects of the school's performance: the effectiveness of safeguarding arrangements; whether leaders' and governors' actions to improve end-of-key-stage outcomes are leading to higher standards; how well staff challenge the most able pupils in the school to reach their potential; how well current pupils in all year groups and phases are achieving in writing and mathematics; and whether pupils' attendance is improving and rates of persistent absence falling.
- You and all your staff know the pupils in the school extremely well and have ensured that, if there are any gaps in their knowledge and understanding, these are tackled promptly. The performance of each pupil and each class is scrutinised closely by leaders and teachers. With such small groups of pupils, you are sensibly cautious about taking a blanket approach to raising achievement. Instead, pupil by pupil, you ensure that teachers' planning and assessment are focused precisely on what needs to improve.
- Careful planning of curriculum topics, challenging texts to read and inspiring materials raise pupils' aspirations and sustain their motivation. Right from the start in the Reception class, pupils are being challenged to do their best.
- In addition, you and governors have made bold decisions with the deployment of

teaching and support staff in order to ensure that pupils benefit from the best-quality teaching. Additional teaching staff have been appointed to provide extra tuition for those pupils who need to catch up.

- Current pupils make good progress in writing and mathematics. Many more are on track to reach or exceed the expected standard at the end of their key stages, compared with the 2017 cohort. You and your team, together with governors, are confident that key stages 1 and 2 results in 2018 and thereafter will be better. Your confidence is well rooted in evidence of pupils' progress. Their current assessments have been carefully checked and standardised with other schools and by the local authority. In addition, pupils' books demonstrate good progress and high standards. Nevertheless, you are under no illusions about the challenges ahead for those groups of pupils who have experienced disrupted schooling or weaker teaching in the past.
- A strong programme of reading is established for the youngest children, right through to more challenging texts for older pupils. Topics designed to appeal to all pupils in the school stimulate their writing and extend their knowledge of the wider curriculum. For example, pupils told me how they were enjoying learning about the Romans and using an imaginary hoard of ancient coins to create an authentic and carefully constructed news report. Similarly, pupils' poems about the Second World War, written in response to a published poem, are sensitively crafted and edited pieces of work.
- The most able pupils are a key focus for the school. Pupils told me how they are being challenged to use more demanding vocabulary. Teachers' insistence on accurate spelling and punctuation is promoting pupils' confidence and enabling them to spend more time on the content of their work. More pupils in all year groups are now reaching greater depth in their writing and producing consistently sophisticated assignments. However, it is clear that the most able pupils in the school could be challenged to achieve even more, particularly in their reading, thinking and exploration of vocabulary.
- Pupils' work in mathematics demonstrates a wide range of problem solving and opportunities to reason. Pupils move confidently between experimenting with real-life problems to using words and numbers to express mathematical concepts in their work. Progression through the school is clearly evident, with pupils building on what they already know and understand when faced with new concepts and problems.
- For example, I saw pupils in Year 1 using their mathematical knowledge to estimate the capacity of different jars and bottles of food and drink. They then accurately recorded their findings in writing and practised what they had learned with number problems, under the skilful guidance of their teacher. Similarly, in the Reception class, children explored different kinds of three-dimensional shapes. After some direct teaching, they were able to repeat and remember 'sphere', 'cone' and 'cylinder' with complete confidence. They went on to name, explore and construct these shapes in many different contexts, identifying and talking about their key features.
- Attendance is a key priority for the school. As a result of the school's determined work with families and communities, the number of pupils who are persistently

absent has declined and overall attendance is close to national figures. However, there is no complacency. Leaders take a positive approach. Pupils are personally encouraged to take part in clubs and activities to boost good attendance. Leaders reward good or improved attendance as an incentive. Compelling reminders about good attendance feature in every newsletter to parents. Leaders are not afraid to initiate fixed-penalty notices for inexcusable poor attendance.

Next steps for the school

Leaders and those responsible for governance should ensure that:

- the most able pupils in the school are challenged to think deeply, explore concepts and build up their vocabulary
- pupils from all groups, including those who join the school at different times, make good progress and achieve their potential.

I am copying this letter to the chair of the governing body, 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

Janet Pearce
Her Majesty's Inspector

Information about the inspection

I met with you, your senior teacher, and six members of the governing body, including the chair of governors. I also met with a link adviser from the local authority. Together, we visited all classes to observe teaching and learning, and I reviewed a sample of work from pupils, including from those pupils who are most able. A small selection of pupils from the Reception class to Year 6 read to me and talked to me about their books. I met with teachers to discuss the progress of particular pupils in their classes.

I took account of 22 responses from parents to Ofsted's online questionnaire, Parent View, 15 of whom contributed free-text comments. Nine staff responded to the online staff survey, and their views were considered alongside other evidence. I also took note of the views of the 39 pupils who responded to the pupil survey.

I considered a range of school documentation, including information about pupils' achievement, and the school improvement plan. I reviewed the school's safeguarding policies and procedures, including checks on the suitability of staff. I reviewed your own up-to-date evaluation of the school's effectiveness and the impact of your actions on current pupils' progress. The school meets the Department for Education's definition of a coasting school based on key stage 2

academic performance results in 2015, 2016 and 2017.