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Mrs Aimee Dear  
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Dear Mrs Dear

### **Short inspection of Itchen Abbas Primary School**

Following my visit to the school on 24 April 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 March 2014.

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

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

In the past four years, there have been significant changes to the staff team, with only three current members of staff employed at the time of the previous inspection. The leadership team has been strengthened by the appointment of an inclusion manager who provides good support and challenge for you. Staff enjoy working at Itchen Abbas and are proud to be members of the school team. The previous inspection report highlighted the school's many strengths, including outstanding behaviour, strong attendance and good teaching. You have maintained these strengths.

Pupils love their small and caring school. They appreciate many aspects of school life, including sporting and musical opportunities, as well as the wide variety of after-school clubs on offer. They try hard in lessons and are rightly proud of their work. Relationships are strong. Pupils spoke about how friendly their school is. One pupil, who gave me a letter telling me his views of the school, wrote, 'It was like heaven when I moved to Itchen Abbas Primary School.' A parent commented, 'I will always be eternally grateful for the nurturing environment in which both of my children find themselves.'

Nevertheless, parents' and carers' views of the school are polarised. Some parents are very complimentary about the welcoming environment in the school and how

well teachers know their children. Leaders know, however, that there are parents who continue to have anxieties about the leadership and management of the school. Leaders and governors have done much to improve channels of communication with parents, including an open parent forum and a recent questionnaire. However, they realise that more needs to be done to allay some parental anxieties. You are rightly committed to building partnerships further.

Leaders have a good understanding of the school's many strengths and of those aspects that could be even better. During the last inspection, you were asked to improve achievement in mathematics. You have done this. In 2017, at the end of both key stage 1 and key stage 2, pupils' attainment in mathematics was in line with the national averages. Progress by the end of key stage 2 was also in line with the national average. Leaders, including middle leaders, look very closely at the progress of pupils over time to ensure that no pupil falls behind. However, you acknowledge that more can be done to ensure that a greater proportion of pupils reach the higher standards across the curriculum.

Governors take an active role in validating what they are being told. They check whether the actions identified in the school improvement plan are being addressed effectively through their regular school-improvement visit days. They support and challenge you well. For example, they systematically check on the impact of the recent restructuring of classes to ensure that outcomes for all year groups remain high.

You, leaders and governors recognise that there is work to do to improve the school further, especially to ensure that the needs of pupils who have special educational needs (SEN) and/or disabilities are fully met. You have sensibly commissioned a full audit of special educational needs and disability practice and provision from the local authority to thoroughly review this area of your work.

### **Safeguarding is effective.**

You, school leaders and governors have ensured that all safeguarding arrangements are fit for purpose, and records are detailed and of high quality. You regularly check whether all staff and governors understand school policy and procedures, alongside their understanding of recent legislation. Staff are quick to record their concerns if they are worried about a pupil. They pass this information to the designated safeguarding lead in a timely manner. This enables you to make referrals to external agencies when required. Pre-employment checks to ensure the suitability of all adults who work or volunteer in the school are fully in place.

Those pupils to whom I spoke feel safe in school. They said that, if they have any concerns, staff listen to them. Pupils demonstrate an appropriate knowledge of the different types of bullying. They told me there is currently no bullying in the school but, if there was, 'teachers would be straight on it'. However, a small minority of parents raised concerns about bullying. School records and staff views show that the very few incidents of reported bullying are typically dealt with effectively. Pupils

behave well and respect each other. They show a good understanding of how to keep themselves safe online.

## **Inspection findings**

- At the beginning of the inspection, we agreed to look at specific aspects of the school's work, including: the effectiveness of safeguarding; leaders' actions to improve pupils' attainment in phonics; how effectively the quality of teaching in mathematics is ensuring that pupils make strong progress; and how effectively leaders provide high-quality provision for pupils with additional needs, including those who have SEN and/or disabilities, disadvantaged pupils and the most able, incorporating the views of parents.
- Despite the Year 1 phonics screening check results being in line with the national average in 2017, you and your leaders know that these results have often not been good enough over recent years. Since the last inspection, leaders have taken decisive action to improve phonics teaching by ensuring high-quality training and by redesigning the phonics programme taught at the school. This is having a positive impact on pupils' ability to use their phonics knowledge to read and write new or unfamiliar words. Pupils now make good progress. Their work shows that they are able to apply their increasing phonics knowledge to their independent writing. Pupils who did not reach the expected standard in Year 1 receive targeted phonics interventions to ensure that they catch up.
- The mathematics curriculum provides a strong balance across the different aspects of mathematics, weaving problem-solving and reasoning through all topics. Pupils correctly use a wide range of mathematical vocabulary. For example, in a Reception and Year 1 mixed-age class, pupils were thinking of other words that could be used in place of 'equals'. They confidently suggested 'same', 'even' and 'balance', showing a sound understanding of the equals concept. The mathematics leader has an accurate understanding of the quality of mathematics teaching in the school and is having a sharp impact on the professional development of staff. My classroom visits, including the scrutiny of pupils' work, showed that pupils make good progress in mathematics. However, we agreed that more could be done to effectively challenge the most able pupils in mathematics, so that more pupils reach the higher standards.
- The proportion of disadvantaged pupils in the school is too small for their results to be reported on without danger of identifying individuals. The inclusion leader has established a clear strategy to ensure that the very few disadvantaged pupils in the school achieve well. Pupils' individual barriers to learning are well understood and leaders track pupils' progress carefully.
- Leaders have made sure that pupils who have SEN and/or disabilities are cared for well. However, expectations of what these pupils are capable of achieving are too low. While some pupils who have SEN and/or disabilities make strong progress, others do not learn well enough. A number of parents expressed concern about their child's complex needs not being met well enough. You and your leaders appreciate that this area is a focus for school improvement. Training has been used to improve staff understanding of how to support pupils who

have, or may have, SEN and/or disabilities, and further training is planned.

- In 2017, the proportions of pupils who attained the higher standards in reading and writing in Year 6 and greater depth in Year 2 were in line with the national average. Current improvement planning focuses sharply on increasing the proportion of pupils who meet these higher standards across the school. Since the last inspection, leaders have developed a varied and enriched enquiry-based curriculum which makes the best use of the local area. This new curriculum is beginning to have an impact on effectively challenging the most able pupils across a wide range of subjects. We agreed, however, that ensuring that the most able pupils are sufficiently challenged is a focus for the school.

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

Leaders and those responsible for governance should ensure that:

- they improve the teaching and support for pupils who have SEN and/or disabilities, and rigorously monitor and evaluate the impact of this provision so that it more effectively meets pupils' differing and specific learning, emotional and social needs
- the most able pupils are consistently provided with sufficient challenge to ensure that more pupils reach the higher standards
- they extend the partnerships with parents so that they are better informed and are confident that their views are thoughtfully considered.

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

Yours sincerely

Lea Hannam  
**Ofsted Inspector**

### **Information about the inspection**

During the inspection, I met with you and your inclusion manager to discuss the school's effectiveness. Together with your mathematics leader, we looked at the quality of pupils' work in books. You accompanied me on visits to lessons in all classes to observe pupils' learning, talk to pupils and look at their work. I considered 49 responses from parents to the online questionnaire, Parent View, and their free-text comments. I spoke to parents at the beginning of the school day and to two parents on the telephone. I also held a telephone conversation with the representative from the local authority. Responses to the staff and pupils' questionnaires were also considered. I met with five governors, including the chair

of the governing body. I also spoke to a group of pupils about their school. I evaluated the school's safeguarding arrangements. A wide range of documents were examined, including the school's self-evaluation and school improvement planning, pupils' progress information, the pupil premium strategy and various school policies.