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Mr Ian Rix
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Dear Mr Rix

Short inspection of Ashley Junior School

Following my visit to the school on 22 May 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 December 2014.

This school continues to be good.

Leaders have maintained the good quality of education in the school since the last inspection. Under your sustained and passionate leadership you have led the school through a number of changes which have had positive impact on pupils' outcomes, both academically and pastorally. You know the school very well and have a positive outlook on what you want the pupils to achieve. You see the whole child and you know them as individuals. Because of this, staff, families and governors appreciate all that you do for the school community. Most importantly, the pupils know you are on their side and appreciate the leadership that you bring to their school.

During your thirteen years at the school, you have adapted and moulded your leadership team so that they consistently strengthen teaching and improve outcomes. As a leader, you work collaboratively with staff to successfully get the best from all. Staff feel valued and enjoy working with you. You have evaluated accurately what the school does well and what could be even better. Your plans for the school are clear and effective. Parents and carers are very complimentary about Ashley Juniors. One parent said, 'I feel this school is very well led; the headteacher always makes time for the children and parents. My child is very happy and is progressing well.'

Your resourced provision for pupils with moderate learning difficulties is an important part of the school. Staff are highly committed to providing an appropriate, enriching curriculum for the pupils. Pupils enjoy their mornings in the resource base.

They are focused and well supported and because of this they make good progress. Those who attend the resource base are successfully integrated into mainstream school in the afternoon. This benefits the whole school community.

Leaders have successfully addressed the areas for improvement identified at the last inspection. Pupils are regularly given opportunities to write in interesting ways so that outcomes for writing are consistently strong. The quality of teaching has improved. In English, more pupils are achieving greater depth in both reading and writing. Further work is being carried out so that there is the same consistent challenge in mathematics.

Pupils really enjoy attending Ashley Junior School. They say it is a great place to learn. One pupil said, 'Our school is always full of happy faces.' They are consistently engaged in learning because teachers make it fun. Pupils make the most of the enriching curriculum and enjoy all the music and sport provided. They gain much from the extensive grounds and woods. At playtime, relationships are very positive; pupils appreciate staff getting involved in playing games and supporting activities. Pupils work hard within their lessons and are happy to 'have a go' at new learning. They focus well in their calm purposeful classrooms and respond well to questioning and challenge. They embrace school life and have only positive things to say about it. One pupil said, 'Teachers always try and make our learning fun.'

Safeguarding is effective.

Arrangements to keep pupils safe are effective. For example, when recruiting staff, leaders carry out all relevant checks to ensure that all staff are fit to work with pupils. Governors are equally vigilant and regularly check the school's safeguarding work. You have created a positive culture for safeguarding for all pupils. Staff are clear on their responsibilities in protecting pupils. The school also keeps clear records and follows up on any areas of concern in a timely manner. Parents are happy with the care and support their children receive. They feel that pastoral care is nurturing and well planned.

You have involved pupils in safeguarding. For example, pupils carry out risk assessments when appropriate. They also know what to do if they have concerns and are clear about safeguarding procedures. They feel supported by staff guidance and access to the nurture room. Pupils feel safe. Pupils know that they can talk to any member of staff and they will listen. One pupil said that, 'If there is a problem, I know any teacher would help.'

Inspection findings

- During this inspection, we looked closely at specific aspects of the school's provision, including: the effectiveness of safeguarding arrangements; pupils' attendance; disadvantaged pupils' achievement in grammar, punctuation and spelling; how well the school has developed greater depth in pupils' understanding in mathematics.

- Persistent absenteeism was too high in 2017. Since September, you have introduced a number of successful strategies to reduce this. You have raised the profile of the importance of good attendance. You have supported families and worked with external professionals, such as the local doctor's surgery. You have celebrated and praised good attendance. Underpinning the work on attendance is the effective weekly monitoring meeting to track success. Persistent absenteeism has improved greatly but you are aware that there is still more to do to improve their attendance further.
- Leaders have rightly focused on improving the grammar, punctuation and spelling skills of pupils who are disadvantaged following disappointing outcomes in 2017. By developing their high-level vocabulary and language skills you have effectively raised expectations. You have strengthened the way you work with families on spellings. Home spelling books are used skilfully and support core learning. Pupils' spelling skills are improving and these are being transferred into everyday written work. Current internal information indicates that pupils are making positive progress in this area. Leaders have ensured that more challenging grammar skills are well planned for and taught across the school. Staff have been trained to ensure that pupils can manipulate text and use an 'explain, change and create' approach.
- Last year, the proportion of pupils achieving greater depth in mathematics was below national figures. You have taken positive steps to improve this. You have introduced new planning mathematical 'learning journeys', focused on developing mathematical vocabulary. Staff have worked on developing problem-solving skills. Consequently, pupils' confidence in working at greater depth has improved. Pupils work well in mathematics. They challenge and support each other. Teachers ask open-ended questions and pupils give clear reasons for their answers. Sometimes pupils feel that they could be challenged more quickly after they have understood a key skill. You are aware of this and know that achieving greater consistency in challenge is the school's next step.

Next steps for the school

Leaders and those responsible for governance should ensure that:

- the attendance of pupils who are persistent absentees improves
- teachers plan for further opportunities to challenge the most able pupils in mathematics.

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

Felix Rayner
Ofsted Inspector

Information about the inspection

I visited classrooms to assess the progress that pupils were making and talked to them about their learning. Pupils' behaviour was observed throughout the day. I held discussions with you, senior and middle leaders, the chair of the governing body and two other governors. I spoke to a representative of the local authority on the telephone. Parents were spoken to at the start of the school day, and 25 replies to Ofsted's online parent questionnaire were considered. 12 replies to the staff survey were also considered. A wide range of documents were scrutinised, including the single central record of staff checks, safeguarding documents, pupils' progress and attainment information, the school's self-evaluation and development planning, and records of visits by the local authority.