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Mrs Helen Morris
Executive Headteacher
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Dear Mrs Morris

Short inspection of Sopley Primary School

Following my visit to the school on 6 June 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 November 2013.

This school continues to be good.

Leaders have maintained the good quality of education in the school since the last inspection. When you started at the school in April 2018, you swiftly identified priorities for improvement. Working closely with your heads of school, you implemented a detailed and precise action plan to drive the school forward. Your self-assessment is accurate, which reflects your secure understanding of the school's strengths and weaknesses. In the short amount of time that you have led the school, you have built positive relationships with your staff. They share your commitment and high expectations for the pupils in the school. Governors know the school well and take their responsibilities seriously. They provide school leaders with effective challenge and support.

You and your staff have created a welcoming and nurturing environment. As a result, pupils enjoy learning and are happy in school. They behave well and are polite and respectful towards adults, classmates and visitors. When talking to pupils, they described their experiences in school as 'fun and exciting', where 'everyone is kind, caring and looks after each other'. Pupils spoke with enthusiasm about their curriculum. They recalled their excitement when re-enacting the Battle of Bosworth, linked with their history topic, and also when making a human digestive system in science. Pupils were particularly positive about having the opportunity to walk or run the 'daily mile' each morning. One pupil said that it 'gave them a boost to their energy and built up their stamina' before starting their learning.

Over the past number of years, the school has experienced significant challenges in

the retention of school leaders. Understandably, this has led to some parents and carers feeling concerned. However, the parents I spoke to described the many positive changes that have occurred this year due to the continuity of the new leadership team. Parents reported how you and your heads of school have improved communication and consistency, which has reassured them that the school is moving in a positive direction. Many parents who responded to Ofsted's online questionnaire, Parent View, felt that their children are happy at school. They felt that their children are taught well and are making good progress.

At the time of the previous inspection, leaders were asked to improve the school's assessment procedures so that all pupils achieved their best, particularly in writing. You have recently changed the assessment system in school and teachers have received training on how best to monitor pupils' progress. This is already having a positive impact. Teachers can now identify the precise needs of individual pupils and plan more effectively for the next steps in pupils' learning. Inspectors also asked leaders to improve the support for pupils who have special educational needs (SEN) and/or disabilities. Leaders routinely track and monitor the progress of these pupils and teachers deploy their additional adults effectively so that pupils make good progress from their starting points.

You are keen to keep improving all aspects of the school. You and your heads of school are working alongside teachers to ensure that English and mathematics planning challenges the most able pupils in all year groups. In addition, you are focusing on improving the attendance of pupils.

Safeguarding is effective.

The leadership team has ensured that all safeguarding arrangements are fit for purpose and records are detailed and thorough. Governors frequently attend training, including safer recruitment, and work closely with leaders to ensure that safeguarding procedures are effective. All members of staff receive regular training. As a result, they have a secure understanding of the school's safeguarding expectations, including arrangements for reporting concerns. This allows you to react swiftly when the need arises, making referrals to other agencies in a timely manner. You are not afraid to escalate your concerns if you feel more should be done to keep a pupil safe.

The vast majority of parents who completed Ofsted's questionnaire, Parent View, felt that their children are safe at school and well looked after. Pupils I spoke to reported a wide range of ways that the school teaches them to stay safe, through lessons about road safety, 'stranger danger' and an e-safety project about online bullying. They also discussed how a recent visit from a representative of the National Society for the Prevention of Cruelty to Children has taught them what to do if they are troubled about anything outside school. All pupils who completed Ofsted's pupil survey said that they would be confident to talk to an adult if something was worrying them in school. Pupils enjoy coming to school. However, some groups of pupils have high rates of absence. You and your heads of school have already started to make changes so that pupils' attendance improves. You are

right to continue to focus on this as an area of priority for the school.

Inspection findings

- During this inspection, I evaluated how well teaching ensures that disadvantaged pupils make the same rapid progress as their classmates; the degree of challenge for the most able pupils; and what actions leaders are taking to reduce absence.
- Pupil premium funding is used effectively to support the learning of disadvantaged pupils. You regularly monitor this group of pupils to ensure that they keep up with their classmates and do not fall behind in their learning. As a result, differences between the achievement of disadvantaged pupils and that of other pupils in the school are diminishing. You ensure that a wide range of successful interventions are in place to meet the needs of pupils. Learning support staff ask questions skilfully, encouraging pupils to solve problems and consolidate their understanding independently. Disadvantaged pupils make good progress from their starting points in reading, writing and mathematics.
- School assessment information indicates that the most able pupils do not make fast enough progress in reading, writing and mathematics. My scrutiny of pupils' workbooks in key stage 1 and key stage 2 identified that teachers do not routinely or sufficiently challenge the most able pupils. When talking to pupils, some said that they repeated work that they already understood. Leaders have started to make some effective changes to the way in which the most able pupils are challenged in English and mathematics. However, you rightly acknowledge that this should remain a priority for improvement.
- Leaders have reshaped strategies to improve attendance and appointed a new member of staff to monitor pupils' absence more thoroughly. Regular meetings now take place with parents to discuss leaders' concerns about attendance. These actions are beginning to reduce some pupils' high rates of absence. However, attendance levels are still lower than average and some pupils continue to miss too much school. You and your governors rightly recognise that pupils' attendance should remain a school priority.

Next steps for the school

Leaders and those responsible for governance should ensure that:

- learning across the curriculum fully challenges the most able pupils so that more of them reach the highest standards of attainment by the end of key stages 1 and 2
- fewer pupils miss school regularly.

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

Luisa Gould
Ofsted Inspector

Information about the inspection

I met with you, your heads of school and a group of governors. I had a telephone conversation with a representative from the local authority. We discussed and agreed the key lines of enquiry for the inspection. With you and your heads of school, we observed learning in every class. I reviewed a range of English and mathematics books. We discussed the school's assessment information about outcomes for current pupils, your plans for improvement and your evaluation of the school's effectiveness. I considered 40 responses to Ofsted's online questionnaire, Parent View, and took account of parents' free-text comments. I analysed a range of school documentation, including policies and procedures, and minutes from governing body meetings. I met members of the administration team to review safer recruitment practices. I checked other safeguarding documentation and procedures.