

Ofsted  
Piccadilly Gate  
Store Street  
Manchester  
M1 2WD

T 0300 123 4234  
[www.gov.uk/ofsted](http://www.gov.uk/ofsted)



25 June 2018

Mrs Heather Godding  
Headteacher  
Pashley Down Infant School  
Beechy Avenue  
Eastbourne  
East Sussex  
BN20 8NX

Dear Mrs Godding

### **Short inspection of Pashley Down Infant School**

Following my visit to the school on 14 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 January 2014.

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

The leadership team has maintained the good quality of education in the school since the last inspection. Governors and the local authority have guided the school through a period in recent years where there have been significant changes of staff. All senior leaders and several teachers have been appointed since the previous inspection. With a new permanent headteacher and deputy headteacher in post, the school has entered a period of greater stability.

Leaders and governors have an accurate understanding of the school and are ambitious to make it the best it can possibly be. Morale among staff is high. The overwhelming majority of staff enjoy working at the school and feel proud to be part of the team. Senior leaders provide appropriate professional development opportunities for all staff. Staff embrace leaders' vision of improving the school and all work hard to bring this about.

Pupils love coming to school. They work hard, have positive attitudes to learning and are proud of their achievements. The school's environment, inside and out, plays an important part in generating pupils' enthusiasm for learning. Immersive displays in corridors recreate such places as fairy tale woodlands and the seaside, helping pupils to be inspired by their learning. The outside area is exceptionally well used to extend pupils' learning and enrich their experience. The curriculum is a treasure trove of memorable learning experiences. Pupils enjoy caring for the animals and chickens in the school's mini farmyard. They grow their own vegetables and go on adventures in the woodland. One boy vividly recalled the time when he had gone on an expedition to the woods with his classmates to find the polar

explorer Ernest Shackleton.

Parents are very happy with the school. One parent, speaking for many, said: 'The strong sense of community makes this a happy school and a joy to be part of.' All parents who recorded their views on Ofsted's online survey, Parent View, said that their children enjoy school, are safe and make good progress. Parents I met with at the start of the day echoed these views and appreciated the way that the whole community gets on harmoniously. They particularly praised the school's curriculum and the use of the outside areas. One parent said of her daughter: 'She has developed a curiosity for learning new things and every day is a new adventure.'

Pupils agree that the playground is a friendly place where pupils get along well and are kind to each other. Occasionally, pupils fall out and play roughly at breaktimes, but staff are quick to notice and take swift and effective action. However, pupils are not clear about the differences between such incidents and bullying, and sometimes confuse the two.

Outcomes for pupils are good and improving, especially in reading and mathematics. The proportions of pupils who achieved the expected standard in reading, writing and mathematics at the end of key stage 1, in 2017, were below the national figures. However, the proportions of pupils who achieved greater depth were above the national averages. This academic year, pupils are writing more frequently and in a range of subjects and, as a result, are making stronger progress. This has addressed one of the areas for improvement identified at the previous inspection. However, the school's new approaches to the teaching of writing have not had time to embed, so pupils are achieving less well in writing than in other subjects. Also, we agreed that pupils' handwriting and the presentation of their written work is not at a consistently high standard.

Senior leaders use pupils' progress information to set challenging targets and to intervene quickly when pupils start falling behind. Leaders sharply focus on how well groups of pupils are achieving, including disadvantaged pupils and pupils who have special educational needs (SEN) and/or disabilities. In this, they have addressed another area for improvement from the previous inspection.

The teaching of phonics is a strength of the school. The proportion of pupils who achieve the expected standard in the phonics screening check at the end of Year 1 has risen steadily over recent years. This year, outcomes in phonics are on track to be well above the national average. The deputy headteacher has set up a phonics hub at the school, which offers valuable support and training to other schools.

Children get off to a good start in the early years. Outcomes have continued to rise in recent years and are securely above the national average. Children learn in well-resourced classrooms and outside areas. Leaders' work to improve the outside learning environment has addressed another aspect from the previous inspection.

## **Safeguarding is effective.**

Senior leaders have ensured that there is a strong culture of safeguarding. Staff have had appropriate training and up-to-date advice so that they understand how to recognise and report any signs that a pupil may be at risk. The recently introduced online system for recording and reporting allows staff to note any concerns about a pupil quickly and accurately. Pupils feel safe in school and rightly trust that staff will look after them and deal with any worries that they may have.

Governors check that policies are kept up to date. They also monitor important aspects of safeguarding, such as ensuring that leaders carry out background and recruitment checks on people who wish to work in school. Senior leaders and governors undertake an annual audit of safeguarding to look for ways of making practice even stronger.

## **Inspection findings**

- We agreed to focus on three aspects of the school's work during this inspection. The first was to consider how well pupils progress in writing in key stage 1, especially those with low starting points. In recent years, this group of pupils has achieved less well than pupils nationally with similar starting points.
- Recently introduced approaches to the teaching of writing have fired pupils' enthusiasm. Teachers have used exciting and challenging texts as the basis for the writing curriculum. Wherever possible, pupils write for a real purpose and a specific audience. Leaders have placed reading at the heart of this curriculum so that pupils love books and listening to stories. As a result, pupils have also grown to enjoy writing their own stories and texts.
- Teachers focus on ensuring that pupils have a strong foundation of phonics knowledge and grammatical understanding so that they can write accurately. At times, pupils' work is not presented neatly because there is not a consistently applied approach to teaching handwriting in the school. Leaders have provided specific training so that teachers understand how to teach writing well. Pupils with low starting points are making good progress because leaders and teachers understand their individual needs. Staff provide tailored support to help these pupils develop good basic writing skills and grow in confidence. However, the recent improvements in the teaching of writing have not had time to have a strong impact on outcomes.
- The second area we looked at focused on how leaders have brought about the steady improvement in early years outcomes in mathematics. Subject leaders have a very clear understanding of how mathematics is taught across the school. They have introduced new approaches to the teaching of mathematics so that pupils develop mastery. Subject leaders provide a valuable source of expertise and advice for teachers. There is now a shared approach to mathematics teaching, greater consistency across the school and better outcomes for children.
- In early years, leaders have ensured that there is a wealth of practical resources for children to use both indoors and outside. Children use this equipment to gain a clear understanding of the key concepts and knowledge that provide a strong

foundation for mathematics. Staff understand the importance of teaching children mathematical language and specific vocabulary. This is enabling children to explain and reason mathematically from a young age. Consequently, children achieve well and are ready for the greater challenges of Year 1.

- The third focus area was leaders and governors' use of the pupil premium to close the gap between the attainment of disadvantaged pupils and other pupils nationally. Staff are ambitious for disadvantaged pupils. Senior leaders have a clear understanding of pupils' specific needs and barriers to learning. Consequently, senior leaders and governors make wise decisions about the spending of this additional funding.
- As a result, disadvantaged pupils are making good progress. The difference between their attainment and that of other pupils in the school has reduced in recent years. For disadvantaged pupils currently in school, there is now little difference between their attainment and that of others in most year groups and subjects. In Year 2, a greater proportion of disadvantaged pupils are on track to achieve the greater depth in reading and mathematics.

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

Leaders and those responsible for governance should ensure that:

- recent improvements in the quality of the teaching of writing are embedded and further strengthened
- a more systematic approach to the teaching of handwriting is implemented so that pupils' handwriting improves.

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

Yours sincerely

Bruce Waelend  
**Ofsted Inspector**

### **Information about the inspection**

During the inspection, I met with you, the deputy headteacher, the leaders of mathematics, the inclusion leader and nine members of the governing body. I spoke with a representative of the local authority on the telephone. We visited classes in all year groups to observe teaching and learning and look at pupils' work. I met with the leaders of mathematics on a learning walk. I observed pupils' behaviour around the school at lunchtime and at breaktime, and spoke to many pupils during the day. I also met some of the school councillors. I considered 29 responses to the staff survey and 70 responses to Ofsted's online questionnaire, Parent View. I spoke to several parents at the beginning of the day. Several documents were taken into consideration, including the school's pupil-tracking information and development

plan. I examined the school's safeguarding policies, procedures and checks.