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Mr Noel Fadden  
Headteacher  
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Dear Mr Noel Fadden

### **Short inspection of Southover CofE Primary School**

Following my visit to the school on 26 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 October 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 have taken effective action, since your appointment in September 2017, to ensure that pupils' progress has improved across year groups, particularly in mathematics and writing. You have established a new leadership team and accurately evaluated the school's strengths and weaknesses. The school has been through a period of expansion in the past two years. You have ensured that this transition to becoming a bigger school has been managed well and that the high-quality care that staff provide has remained a strength of the school.

Your actions have been effective in making rapid improvements in pupils' progress and teaching. In 2017, pupils' progress by the end of key stage 2 in writing and mathematics was below average. You correctly identified the necessary actions to improve the teaching of mathematics and writing, including the way that teachers use information about pupils' progress to plan effectively. You intend to build on this success to ensure the most able pupils achieve as well as possible in mathematics. At the time of the previous inspection, you were asked to improve attainment in writing. Pupils' progress in writing has improved and current pupils are on track to exceed national averages of attainment.

You have been ably supported by the local authority. The local authority has provided high levels of challenge to governors and leaders. A 'progress group' is chaired by a local authority representative. This group has been effective in ensuring that information on how well pupils are achieving has been increasingly well used by governors, leaders and teachers. Your staff are very supportive of the

changes that you have made this year. They understand the need for improvements in pupils' progress and they have worked hard to ensure that pupils reach higher standards in mathematics and writing. Staff are an integral part of the nurturing environment, and they provide high-quality care. They prioritise pupils' safety and ensure that pupils now make good progress over time.

Pupils enjoy school. Consequently, most pupils attend regularly, although absence rates are higher for a small proportion of disadvantaged pupils. You have ensured that there is a whole-school focus on good behaviour. Pupils respond well to your high expectations of behaviour. They behave very well in lessons and at social times. Pupils have a well-developed sense of fundamental British values because of the varied opportunities the curriculum offers. For example, one pupil told me that the best thing about the school was that there were 'equal opportunities for everyone'. Pupils are very complimentary about their school, describing it with words such as 'epic' and 'amazing'.

### **Safeguarding is effective.**

The leadership team has ensured that all safeguarding arrangements are fit for purpose. Leaders ensure that all staff, governors and volunteers receive appropriate checks and detailed records are kept of these processes. Governors regularly check the school's safeguarding arrangements. The local authority recently carried out a safeguarding audit to assure governors that arrangements are as robust as possible.

Leaders work effectively with external agencies to safeguard vulnerable pupils. Staff receive appropriate training and they know what to do if they are worried that a child is at risk of harm. Similarly, pupils know who to go to if they are worried or need to report something.

### **Inspection findings**

- During the inspection we agreed that I would look at the effectiveness of safeguarding; how leaders ensure that pupils are challenged within the curriculum; how effective leaders' actions are in reducing absence; the impact of leaders' actions on progress in mathematics, particularly for disadvantaged pupils; and how well governors challenge leaders to improve attendance and pupils' progress.
- Pupils make good progress across the curriculum. Leaders have introduced a new assessment system over the past year. Teachers use this effectively to check which pupils have gaps in their knowledge, skills and understanding. They use this information successfully when planning learning, to help pupils make good progress. Overall, current pupils achieve well in reading, writing and mathematics. The percentage of current pupils who achieve a high standard in reading, writing and mathematics is higher than the national average. Nevertheless, most-able pupils do not make strong enough progress in mathematics. Leaders are aware that they have further work to do to ensure that all teachers plan sufficiently challenging lessons for all pupils.
- The varied and interesting curriculum is a strength of the school. Pupils achieve

well in a range of subjects, such as music, art, geography and history.

Increasingly, teachers' effective planning leads to the needs of pupils being met in a wide range of subjects across the curriculum. As a result, pupils make strong progress. Pupils do particularly well in religious education. They learn about different religions and have opportunities to discuss complex questions in lessons.

- Pupils find topics within the curriculum very interesting. For example, pupils are encouraged to develop their knowledge, skills and understanding in history and geography, and to produce high-quality written responses. Lessons have strong links with home learning. Pupils are keen to do homework. They produce high-quality work that promotes their deep understanding.
- Disadvantaged pupils make increasingly improved progress across year groups. A clear and purposeful pupil premium strategy supports all staff in ensuring that disadvantaged pupils who underachieve are helped to catch up. Outcomes for disadvantaged pupils have improved in reading, writing and mathematics, so that in most year groups they achieve as well as others do nationally.
- Leaders have made raising attendance rates a priority this year. Overall, attendance in 2017 was broadly average. This year, leaders have monitored the attendance of pupils more closely. Consequently, the number of pupils who frequently miss school has decreased significantly this year. Overall, attendance of current pupils is broadly average, but a small number of disadvantaged pupils have weaker attendance.
- Governors regularly challenge leaders. Governors receive pupils' outcomes information from leaders and from the 'progress group'. Consequently, governors are better informed about school issues than they have been in previous years. Governors are passionate about providing a high-quality education and they frequently visit the school so that they can monitor how effective leaders' actions are.

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

Leaders and those responsible for governance should ensure that:

- leaders and teachers use pupils' progress information effectively to make sure that outcomes further improve, particularly for the most able pupils in mathematics
- attendance continues to improve, particularly for disadvantaged pupils.

I am copying this letter to the chair of the governing body, the director of education for the Diocese of Chichester, 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

Harry Ingham  
**Her Majesty's Inspector**

### **Information about the inspection**

I met with you at the start of the day and discussed your view of the strengths and weaknesses of the school. We agreed on the key areas on which I would focus, and the inspection activities that I would undertake during the day.

I visited lessons with you, to observe learning. Together with senior leaders, we looked at the quality of work in pupils' books. I held meetings with pupils and observed behaviour in and around school. I met with governors, and a representative from the local authority. I considered a range of documentation, including safeguarding policies, plans for school improvement, governors' minutes, and information about pupils' progress. I took account of 101 responses to the Ofsted online survey, Parent View, and the outcomes of a staff survey.