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Mr Simon Blight
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Dear Mr Blight

Short inspection of Standens Barn Primary School

Following my visit to the school on 3 July 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 2014.

This school continues to be good.

The leadership team has maintained the good quality of education in the school since the last inspection. The school values its partnership with parents and carers, who are encouraged to play an active role in their children's learning. One parent said: 'The school involves parents in how they teach phonics.' Pupils explained the importance of respect, responsibility and valuing others, which form the core of the school's ethos. Pupils told me that they are happy to come to school and they are appreciative of the range of clubs, visits and wider opportunities planned to stimulate their interest. They spoke enthusiastically about the challenge and fun in preparing for a performance of a collection of Shakespeare's works.

Pupils are confident, polite and articulate. They enjoy playing a part in the smooth running of the school by contributing to the school's policies on behaviour. One pupil summed up his awareness of rights and responsibilities by saying: 'We have to make it work.' Pupils are confident that concerns are dealt with quickly and effectively. Pupils are proud of the different roles and responsibilities they take on, such as leading fundraising activities for local and national charities and raising awareness of how to stay safe and healthy. Recently, a group of children produced and presented a video to the whole school to reinforce these messages. Evaluating the impact of such experiences, one pupil said: 'We will continue with this in later life.'

Pupils are motivated learners. Classrooms, corridors and outside spaces are stimulating and highly engaging places to learn. Teachers provide displays which support pupils' learning effectively. Pupils' work is proudly displayed in classrooms

and around the school.

The governing body provides effective support for the school. Governors have a range of relevant skills and experience to support the work of the school. For example, governors monitored the impact of a recent initiative to improve pupils' attendance. The governing body has an action plan in place which links to the school's development plan. This enables governors to focus their visits on the school's work to address their improvement priorities. Governors have ensured that, as a body, they are well trained and receive professional development in their role. They have a thorough understanding of their roles and responsibilities.

You have addressed the key priorities that were identified as needing improvement at the last inspection. You have ensured that staff have higher expectations of what pupils can achieve in lessons and over time. Senior leaders and middle leaders collect information to check the progress of pupils through regular meetings. Leaders check pupils' learning so they can improve the quality of teaching. Your staff have worked effectively on developing the learning culture, ensuring that pupils have a 'can-do' attitude to learning. Where pupils need to catch up, you provide additional support swiftly.

In order to ensure further improvements for the pupils, you have successfully introduced a reading scheme to develop pupils' skills in deeper analysis of texts. You have also introduced a mathematics scheme in key stages 1 and 2 to develop pupils' reasoning skills.

During our tour of the school, we noted that in some classes in key stages 1 and 2, teachers were not designing tasks effectively to ensure that the most able pupils, including the most able disadvantaged pupils, make the progress of which they are capable in writing and mathematics. Pupils' books showed that some tasks did not challenge these pupils sufficiently.

Safeguarding is effective.

You have ensured that all safeguarding arrangements are fit for purpose. You are diligent and tenacious in your approach to safeguarding. You use your breadth of knowledge well to engage a range of external support services to meet pupils' needs. You are insistent that pupils receive appropriate care and support. Checks to ensure that staff are suitable to work with children are comprehensive and are kept securely. Members of the governing body make thorough checks on all safeguarding practices. The school's systems and procedures are robust.

Leaders, including governors, have developed a strong and effective culture of safeguarding. Staff receive regular, good-quality training. They are knowledgeable about their responsibilities. They are vigilant and confident about reporting any concerns that a pupil may be at risk.

High-quality, detailed records show that you manage concerns swiftly and understand the procedures for referring pupils to other agencies.

Most parents I spoke with, and most of those who completed Ofsted's online questionnaire, Parent View, said that their children are happy to come to school and feel secure. Pupils say they are taught how to stay safe, including when using the internet. Visitors support the work of the school, for example the police, the National Society for the Prevention of Cruelty to Children and the Life Education Bus. Pupils feel safe in school and are confident about seeking help if they have fallen out with other pupils. They can report concerns by using the 'bully bag' that has been introduced. They trust their teachers and know they can speak to them about any concerns they may have.

Inspection findings

- During the inspection, I looked at the quality of teaching and learning in English and mathematics throughout the school.
- Recently, you introduced a system for teachers to assess pupils' attainment and progress at key points through the year. Your latest assessment information shows that the majority of pupils are achieving standards at least in line with expectations for their ages in reading, writing and mathematics.
- The school has reviewed the teaching of reading across the school. You recognised that a significant minority of high attainers, disadvantaged high attainers and middle attainers at the of end key stage 1 made insufficient progress by the end of key stage 2. As a result, you have taken swift action to introduce an approach to reading which helps pupils develop and refine skills in analysing texts and answering questions. Pupils are interested in reading. They are developing their fluency and analytical skills.
- During the inspection, we looked at pupils' work in books and on display. In key stage 2, pupils write regularly and, sometimes, at length. Pupils enjoy writing for different purposes in a range of subjects. For example, we noted good-quality written work based on a study of the Victorians, which included balanced arguments considering the moralities and social norms of the day. Pupils communicated their ideas skilfully. However, such challenging opportunities are not present consistently to allow the most able pupils to consolidate and deepen their skills and make the progress of which they are capable.
- The school has reviewed the teaching of mathematics across the school. You recognised that a proportion of high attainers at the end of key stage 1 made insufficient progress by the end of key stage 2. The progress of this group of pupils was in the bottom 20% of schools nationally in 2017. As a result, you have taken action to identify an appropriate approach to the teaching of mathematics which places an emphasis on pupils developing skills in reasoning so that they can process information and think creatively about solving mathematical problems. This is a whole-school, systematic approach which needs time to embed. Pupils are developing appropriate skills and enjoy the challenge of applying them to problems.
- The last inspection report identified pupils' handwriting as an area needing improvement. You have introduced a programme in the Reception classes, in key

stage 1 and in lower key stage 2 to improve handwriting. Where pupils are routinely taught handwriting skills and have regular opportunities to practise them, work in pupils' books shows that the quality of handwriting is improving. There is more work to do to ensure that all pupils' handwriting skills are effectively developed.

- Published information shows that attendance overall is above the national average. You and the governing body keep a close watch on pupils' attendance and you have recently implemented a successful strategy for reducing the number of pupils who are persistently absent. You rightly challenge parents to ensure that pupils attend regularly.

Next steps for the school

Leaders and those responsible for governance should ensure that:

- the pace of embedding the mathematics programme throughout the school is swift so that pupils develop and deepen reasoning and application skills quickly
- teachers adapt learning tasks consistently so that the most able pupils make faster progress in writing and mathematics
- the school has a consistent approach to developing pupils' skills in handwriting so that their work is neat and well presented.

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

Yours sincerely

Elizabeth Moore
Ofsted Inspector

Information about the inspection

During the inspection, I met with you, senior leaders, middle leaders and a group of governors, including the chair of the governing body. I met with leaders responsible for English, mathematics and assessment. I held discussions with a representative of the local authority and a representative of the Inspire Multi Academy Trust, of which your school is a member. I spoke with pupils during a group discussion and informally during lessons. I observed the conduct of pupils around and outside the school. We visited all classes in the school to observe learning, and looked at a sample of pupils' work. In addition, I checked the school's safeguarding arrangements and records, including the school's record of recruitment checks on staff. I evaluated the school's information about pupils' achievement and attendance, and looked at school improvement plans. I took account of the 30 responses to Parent View, Ofsted's online survey, and the 27 responses to Ofsted's online survey for staff.