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Mrs Natalie Burley
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Dear Mrs Burley

Short inspection of Saltdean Primary School

Following my visit to the school on 9 October 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.

The leadership team has maintained the good quality of education in the school since the last inspection. During a recent period of turbulence in the school's leadership, you and other senior leaders quickly and ably stepped up to continue the drive to improve the school. Parents, carers, governors and the local authority appreciate your work in ensuring that safeguarding, pupils' learning and their progress remain the school's top priorities.

Parents and pupils I spoke to said that the school is friendly and welcoming. Pupils told me that all the adults are caring and that they like their school. This is reflected in their good attendance. Classrooms and shared areas are attractive, with helpful resources and displays of pupils' work, reflecting the topics they study. All staff who responded to Ofsted's questionnaire said they are proud to work at the school.

Leaders have effectively addressed the areas for improvement identified at the school's previous inspection. Reception teachers provide challenging activities in an exciting and well-resourced outdoor area, developing children's imaginative learning through play. Across all early years classes there are clearly focused learning activities. Teachers have a good understanding of each child's attainment on entry. They use this information to adapt the early years provision, addressing any specific gaps in children's development quickly. Consequently, children in Reception make consistently strong progress and a high proportion reach a good level of development by the end of the early years. Parents recognise that the Reception environment nurtures and challenges their children well. They are delighted with the good start that their children make at school.

At the previous inspection, leaders were asked to further improve teaching, particularly for the most able pupils in writing. Pupils continue to make good progress. The unvalidated 2018 key stage 2 outcomes indicate that almost a third of pupils attained the higher standards in both reading and mathematics. The proportion of pupils attaining the higher standard in writing continues to be lower. Although the proportion of pupils attaining the expected standard in writing is greater than the national average, some of the most able pupils did not achieve the higher standard. You remain ambitious that more pupils will meet the challenges of the higher standard. You rightly recognise there is further work to do. Consequently, improving the teaching of writing remains a sharp focus in the school's improvement plan.

Governors have become a determined and skilful team with a deep level of commitment to the school. They regularly attend training to help them better understand their responsibilities. Some newly appointed governors bring different skills and experience to add to the team's expertise. Through links with specific aspects of the school, individual governors get to know its work in greater detail to provide leaders with increasingly effective challenge.

Leaders ensure that the school is inclusive. Pupils who have special educational needs and/or disabilities receive carefully tailored support. Pupils who find school difficult are engaged through the new 'forest school' opportunity, which helps to develop their self-esteem and confidence. Those who fall behind in their learning have timely support to help them catch up, particularly in reading. Parents and carers praise the school for its considerate approach to their children's welfare. One parent described the school as making 'children feel safe through good attachments with teachers'. She added: 'As parents of previously looked-after children who are very bright, we are pleased the school recognises this and works with us to nurture and challenge.'

Safeguarding is effective.

The school's designated leads ensure that all staff and governors are well trained in safeguarding and receive regular updates. The leadership team has ensured that all safeguarding arrangements are fit for purpose. Recruitment checks on the suitability of all who work with pupils are thorough. The link governor for safeguarding regularly visits to ensure that the school's procedures keep pupils safe from harm. Staff know their pupils very well and are alert to any signs that might indicate a concern. The procedures for recording safeguarding concerns ensure that follow-up actions with families and other professionals are swift, so pupils receive timely help.

Pupils emphasised that they always feel safe at school. The overwhelming majority of parents agree with this view. Although a few parents are concerned about bullying, pupils said that it rarely happens. They said that when they fall out with each other, it is easy to talk to an adult in school who will help them. Pupils are taught about safety issues, such as stranger danger. They learn the rules that help to keep them safe online during their computing lessons and e-safety weeks.

Inspection findings

- I reviewed the effectiveness of leaders' work to ensure that current pupils sustain the good progress made by previous cohorts. Visits to classrooms and a scrutiny of pupils' work confirm that current pupils are making strong progress to reach high standards. You keep a sharp focus on the progress of different groups of pupils and identify the reasons why individual pupils do not reach the ambitious targets set for them. Senior leaders routinely discuss the progress of individual pupils with class teachers and arrange additional catch-up sessions where needed. Leaders provide high-quality training to enhance teachers' skills and work alongside those who are at an early stage in their career to develop their practice.
- Leaders' evaluation of the impact of improvement actions is not used effectively to further refine the school's provision. You have recently begun to do this by reflecting on why pupils' writing outcomes are not as strong as their outcomes for reading and mathematics. You have made changes to the teaching of writing as a result. Teachers now focus on developing pupils' understanding of how authors write. For example, they use fiction to help pupils to deepen their knowledge and skills. Pupils' workbooks show that they have creative ideas and are writing coherently and at greater length. They select interesting vocabulary to interest their reader and edit their work to improve its accuracy and content.
- Middle leaders are improving the quality of teaching and learning in their areas of responsibility well. For example, in mathematics, teachers are confident in their subject knowledge and leaders have effectively improved teachers' curriculum planning. They ensure that teachers use apparatus and pictorial models so that pupils understand calculation strategies. However, teaching and learning are occasionally less effective when teachers do not plan learning activities that build progressively on pupils' prior learning. This occurs when teachers are not confidently using their assessments of pupils' understanding to adapt their lessons.
- Another line of enquiry explored how well the school uses the additional funding for disadvantaged pupils to help them make good progress. Cohorts of disadvantaged pupils have made less progress overall than have other pupils. We visited classrooms to see the impact of leaders' current work to address this. Pupils' workbooks confirmed that most disadvantaged pupils make progress in line with peers who have similar starting points.
- The school provides skilfully for disadvantaged pupils who have additional needs, helping them to attend school regularly and develop their reading skills. Teachers are ensuring that current disadvantaged pupils have targeted support to enable them to attain age-related expected standards, and that the most able attain the higher standards. However, along with other aspects of leaders' work, the school's strategy for disadvantaged pupils is not rigorously evaluated. Precise evaluation is required to ensure that this strategy has enough impact, enabling all disadvantaged pupils to make consistently strong progress.
- A further line of enquiry focused on how well pupils achieve in the wider

curriculum. Pupils engage positively in a variety of sports activities. We saw them share their ideas confidently in a religious education discussion and in a personal, social and health education lesson. Pupils enjoy history topics, such as the Vikings and Ancient Egyptians. They appreciate the many visits that enhance their learning and the range of the extended opportunities on offer, such as clubs, events and sports tournaments with other schools.

- You have recently developed the planning for subjects such as history and science so that there are effective links with reading and writing. The curriculum successfully promotes pupils' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development, for example by inviting pupils to vote for global goals that the school will support. Pupils talked enthusiastically about their learning in different subjects. However, although they could clearly describe the activities they did in lessons, they had no effective recall of detailed knowledge. Pupils' workbooks show that teachers' assessment of pupils' prior learning in the wider curriculum is not used as well as their assessment of prior learning in English and mathematics. Teachers do not plan activities with a sharp focus on developing subject-specific knowledge and understanding.

Next steps for the school

Leaders and those responsible for governance should ensure that:

- the impact of their actions to improve pupils' progress is evaluated more sharply to further strengthen outcomes
- they build upon recent work to develop pupils' knowledge and understanding in the wider curriculum to improve pupils' progress
- teachers use their assessments of pupils' learning to meet their needs more precisely.

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

Yours sincerely

Linda Jacobs
Ofsted Inspector

Information about the inspection

At the start of the inspection, I met with you to discuss your evaluation of the school's effectiveness. I held other meetings with you and senior leaders, and with a group of middle leaders. I met with three governors, including the chair of the governing body. I talked to two officers from the local authority. I analysed a range of the school's documentation, including information about pupils' achievement, the school improvement plan, the single central record of recruitment checks, and

safeguarding policies, strategies and procedures.

We jointly visited some classes in all key stages to observe teaching and learning. I talked to pupils in key stage 2, including when they were outside at breaktime. I looked at a range of pupils' work in both key stages 1 and 2, with a particular focus on their writing. I spoke to a number of parents at the start of the school day and considered the 128 responses to Ofsted's online survey, Parent View, including 61 free-text comments. I considered the 39 responses to the staff survey.