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Mr Paul Davis
Headteacher
Stanford Junior School
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Dear Mr Davis

Short inspection of Stanford Junior School

Following my visit to the school on 17 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 May 2014.

This school continues to be good.

The leadership team has maintained the good quality of education in the school since the last inspection.

You joined the school as headteacher in September 2014, and your deputy headteacher and inclusion coordinator took up their posts a year later. Since then, you have worked effectively together to sustain and improve standards in the school, undeterred by the numerous changes of staff that risked impeding your progress. Staff value your collective clear leadership, which ensures that they understand the school's priorities and work hard to address them. They know what would make the school even better and are rightly proud of its many strengths.

Pupils in the school are happy and successful. They settle quickly when they arrive in Year 3 because staff invest in helping them to move successfully from their infant school. They relish the opportunities to learn beyond their formal curriculum, through rich experiences in and out of school, supported by carefully planned trips and activities. For instance, on the day of inspection, they were wearing yellow clothing to support mental health awareness, and spent time reflecting on why this was important. The school welcomes visitors from its local community, helping pupils to develop their understanding of the world around them. Pupils are friendly and confident, interacting politely with each other and their teachers in lessons and around the school. They engage purposefully with learning activities in class and are keen to do well. Their high standards of conduct are reflected in the very low instances of poor behaviour evident in the school. Bullying rarely occurs but is dealt with effectively if it does.

Standards in the school are high. Pupils arrive with above-average key stage 1 levels of attainment in reading, writing and mathematics. By the end of key stage 2, the proportion achieving at least the standard expected for their age remains high, and more pupils attain a higher standard of learning than is seen nationally. However, you are not complacent. You know that pupils' progress across key stage 2 is broadly average and aspire for it to be better. In particular, you recognise that some groups of pupils, such as disadvantaged pupils, do not make as strong progress as other pupils in the school, even though they attain as well as other pupils nationally.

You have acted successfully on the areas identified for improvement at the last inspection. Your team of middle leaders has been strengthened, with useful support from the local authority helping to enhance their work. Some colleagues are relatively new to the school and, as such, are developing their expertise over time. Your staff have worked together to review and adapt the school's marking and feedback policy, ensuring that teachers' work is efficient and meaningful. Consequently, pupils understand clearly what they need to do to make their work even better and they commit to making these improvements. Leaders' work to develop the quality of communication and relationships with parents and carers is most impressive. After a challenging period where some tensions existed between the school and some members of the local community, relationships have improved greatly. Parents who spoke to me at the start of the day had highly positive views about the school, and most who responded to the Parent View online questionnaire expressed similar opinions. A very small minority remain concerned about some issues, including how well leaders respond to their concerns, but this number is declining over time.

Safeguarding is effective.

Leaders and governors are in the early stages of reviewing and updating the written child protection policy to ensure that it meets recently changed national requirements. Despite this, safeguarding practice in the school is fit for purpose and of appropriately high calibre. Leaders make vigilant checks on adults who work with pupils, ensuring that they are suitable to do so, and keep careful records. Staff and governors know about relevant issues, and their legal duties in relation to them, because of the helpful and ongoing training that they receive. This enables them to work effectively and with confidence to keep pupils safe.

Adults understand the importance of gathering and recording information, no matter how insignificant it might seem, to 'build a picture' about a pupil. This helps leaders to identify successfully and promptly where a pupil may be at risk. Safeguarding leaders use their shared expertise well to put extra help in place where needed. They work sensitively and openly with families, pursuing expertise beyond the school when it is appropriate. They are supported well by useful systems that ensure that suitably detailed records are kept about their work.

Pupils, staff and parents share the view that the school is a safe place to be. Pupils learn about relevant issues that help them to manage risks in an age-appropriate

way. They trust that adults in school will help them with any worries they may have. Parents express similar confidence, valuing their regular opportunities to interact with staff on the playground at the start of the school day. This helps to build a culture in the school where, as one parent said, 'Pupils achieve phenomenal things without too much pressure about their learning.'

Inspection findings

- As well as reviewing the effectiveness of safeguarding, we considered how rigorously leaders and governors fulfil their legal duties, how well the school's current work is improving relative weaknesses in attainment for some groups of pupils and whether pupils currently in the school are making consistently strong progress in reading, writing and mathematics.
- Leaders know their school very well. They use helpful evidence to accurately identify priorities for improvement. Their specific work to sustain and improve the quality of teaching across the school is reducing the proportion of pupils who achieve well at key stage 1 and then 'fall behind' where they should be during Year 3. As a result, progress across key stage 2 is increasing over time, although there is further work to do in Year 6, where pupils' progress from key stage 1 is not currently as strong as it should be.
- Governors are capable and committed to the school. As the membership of the governing body has changed, new recruits have been chosen carefully, ensuring that they have suitable skills that strengthen governors' collective work. Some governors, including the co-chairs and vice-chair, have only been in post for a few weeks. Consequently, they are not currently working as efficiently or systematically as they aspire to as they grow into their new roles. However, they have high expectations and the capacity to challenge leaders rigorously about the difference their work makes to pupils' achievements. Over time, records show the positive impact of the governing body's work on standards in the school.
- Pupils experience consistently effective teaching. Leaders put useful staff training in place that develops specific priorities within the school, such as challenging pupils to work at a higher standard as a matter of routine. Teachers share their knowledge and skills with each other so that all pupils benefit from staff development. The impact of this ongoing investment in teachers' learning is evident in standards across the school, which remain high.
- In lessons, pupils engage purposefully with their learning. They work hard and want to do well. They feel challenged by their work and demonstrate secure understanding of what they are learning. Teachers use a wealth of information well to match learning activities to pupils' needs. They direct resources and questions successfully to target pupils they know are at risk of underachieving.
- Leaders use valid performance information incisively to identify pupils who could do even better. For instance, they know that disadvantaged pupils do as well as others nationally but do not achieve as highly as others in school. Similarly, while standards in Year 6 are high, pupils' progress from key stage 1 is not currently as strong as it should be. Leaders have challenged staff successfully to address these relative weaknesses. Pupils' books show good progress in writing and

mathematics since the start of the academic year, with increasing proportions working at a higher standard than in the past.

Next steps for the school

Leaders and those responsible for governance should ensure that:

- all pupils, especially disadvantaged pupils and those currently in Year 6, make consistently strong progress from their starting points by the end of key stage 2
- current work to update the school's child protection policy is brought to a swift conclusion so that the policy matches existing strong practice.

I am copying this letter to the co-chairs 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

Kathryn Moles
Her Majesty's Inspector

Information about the inspection

I met with you and your deputy headteacher to discuss various issues linked to current standards in the school. Together, we visited lessons in all year groups and across a range of subjects, observing learning and talking to pupils about their work. I met with groups of staff, pupils and governors, and spoke with a representative of the local authority on the telephone. I looked at samples of pupils' work from across Years 4, 5 and 6. I reviewed the school's safeguarding arrangements, including the central record of recruitment checks and child protection procedures. I took account of 162 responses to the Parent View online questionnaire, including 111 free-text comments, and spoke to parents informally at the start of the day. I also considered survey responses from 90 pupils and 10 members of staff.