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Mrs Helen Martin
Headteacher
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Dear Mrs Martin

Short inspection of Duncton CofE Junior School

Following my visit to the school on 20 November 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. Together with the deputy headteacher you lead a united team, in which everyone strives to achieve the best for the pupils in their care. Everyone embraces the school's core values, and this helps to create a harmonious, cohesive school community. Morale among staff is high. All who responded to the survey agreed that they enjoy working at the school and being part of the staff team.

Pupils enjoy coming to school. They all comment on how everyone is friendly and welcoming and say that this helps them to value their time in school. Pupils behave well and enjoy learning. They have positive attitudes and want to succeed. Parents are also united in their appreciation of the school. All who responded to the Parent View survey said that they would recommend the school to others. The parents I spoke to at the end of the day echoed this view. Many appreciate the way that you have developed a team of staff who listen to pupils and parents alike and are quick to find solutions to the issues that they raise. Parents also praised the nurturing environment that you and your staff have created. The atmosphere in school enables pupils to flourish. One parent described the school as 'a haven of nurture of the best kind, developing children who care about the world and their contribution to it'.

Senior leaders and governors know the school well. They have brought about many improvements in the school in recent years and have plans in place to bring about

further improvement. However, these plans do not always identify exactly how the intended improvements will be achieved. Senior leaders provide staff with suitable training and development opportunities to extend their professional knowledge and improve their practice. You and the deputy headteacher have a good understanding of what constitutes effective teaching. Leaders offer precise, accurate and appropriate guidance to teachers, celebrating positive aspects of teachers' work and pointing out ways in which they can be even more effective.

Outcomes have improved in recent years, especially in reading and writing. Pupils' progress in reading, writing and mathematics at the end of key stage 2 in 2018 were all in line with the national averages for these subjects. You have ensured that the most able pupils make the strongest progress in the school, thus successfully tackling one of the areas that inspectors asked you to improve on at the previous inspection. Pupils of middle ability have not made the strong progress of most-able pupils. As a general rule, the quality of current pupils' writing is not consistently strong and, at times, pupils' written work is careless. In particular, boys achieve less well than girls in writing.

At the previous inspection, you were asked to ensure that leaders at all levels maintained a sharp focus on pupils' progress when checking the effectiveness of teaching. You make good use of the recently introduced tracking system to focus clearly on the progress of individual pupils, as well as on groups of pupils. Leaders hold staff closely to account for the progress of pupils in their classes. This has contributed to improved outcomes in the school.

Safeguarding is effective.

The school is built on a bedrock of strong, mutually respectful relationships. Each pupil is known individually by staff and this provides a secure environment in which pupils feel safe. You have placed the well-being of pupils at the heart of this school's work. Staff are vigilant to any signs that a pupil may be at risk, and record and report their concerns promptly. Staff have received the right training to maintain a high standard of vigilance. Senior leaders understand their responsibilities to safeguard pupils. They offer helpful support, advice and guidance to families who are going through difficult times.

Pupils understand the various forms of bullying, but are clear that it happens rarely. Parents agree that on the rare occasions that bullying does occur, staff deal with it quickly and decisively. One said, 'The environment is one that provides a very safe surrounding for the children and there is zero tolerance of bullying.'

Policies and protocols are securely in place to ensure that all aspects of safeguarding are securely in place, including checks on people who work in the school. At the start of the inspection, the single central record of these checks contained one or two minor administrative errors. However, these were quickly corrected before the end of the inspection.

Inspection findings

- At the start of the inspection we agreed to focus on three aspects of the school's work. The first of these was to consider the extent to which leaders are ambitious to enable pupils to achieve well in writing. Outcomes in writing have been too low in recent years. In 2016 and 2017, pupils' progress was well below the national average, as was their attainment. Pupils made much better progress, and more attained the expected standard in 2018. However, outcomes in English grammar, punctuation and spelling dipped last year. Boys and pupils of average ability achieve less well than other pupils.
- Leaders have accurately identified writing as an area for improvement. However, although their plans have clear success criteria, it is not always obvious how the associated actions will bring about these improvements.
- The English curriculum does not provide pupils with opportunities for writing that consistently engage their interest or fuel their desire to write. When they do have these opportunities, for example when writing poems for reading at the recent Remembrance Day service in the village, pupils' writing improves, and boys' writing is noticeably better.
- Senior leaders have taken strong and decisive action this year to improve pupils' knowledge of grammar, punctuation and spelling. This is bearing fruit. Pupils' work is already showing signs of improved accuracy, especially in spelling.
- The second aspect of the school's work that I considered was how well teaching meets the needs of disadvantaged pupils and pupils with special educational needs and/or disabilities (SEND). Staff understand the needs and the barriers to learning of the handful of disadvantaged pupils in the school. Senior leaders use the additional funding to overcome these barriers effectively so that pupils currently in the school are making good progress.
- The very few pupils with SEND have their needs assessed carefully so that the right support can be put in place. This enables them to make good progress towards their individual targets.
- Finally, I looked at how well the curriculum enables pupils to achieve well in a wide range of subjects. Pupils benefit from an exciting, engaging curriculum that captures their interest. As a result, pupils show very positive attitudes to their learning. I saw pupils in Year 6 experimenting with electric circuits to make decorations for Christmas festivities. Similarly, younger pupils cooperated well together when painting camouflaged boats. They took great care in their work, spurred on by high levels of expectation from the teacher.
- Pupils enjoy a variety of learning in the outdoor learning environment. For example, they develop their life skills, including how to make fires, cook bread outdoors and brew hot chocolate. The outdoor learning environment also provides opportunities for pupils to apply their mathematical and scientific knowledge in practical situations. Pupils and parents alike are full of praise for the breadth that the curriculum provides. One parent said, 'From the wonderful music, art and drama provision through to the outstanding forest school sessions, all children's needs are met in an uplifting and stimulating environment.'

Next steps for the school

Leaders and those responsible for governance should:

- bring greater urgency to improving outcomes in writing, especially for boys and pupils of average ability, ensuring that teachers:
 - provide opportunities for pupils to write on topics that capture their interest
 - develop high standards of presentation and accuracy in pupils' written work.
- develop the school's improvement plans so that they focus more sharply on how planned actions will bring about intended outcomes.

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 West Sussex. This letter will be published on the Ofsted website.

Yours sincerely

Bruce Waelend
Ofsted Inspector

Information about the inspection

We met regularly throughout the day, along with the deputy headteacher, to discuss a range of topics, including outcomes for pupils, the curriculum and safeguarding. We also met early in the inspection to discuss the school's self-evaluation. I met with some middle leaders during the day, and with five members of the governing body. I spoke with representatives of the local authority and the local diocese on the telephone.

Together, we visited all classes in the school at least twice to observe teaching and learning. During these visits we looked at pupils' work. I observed pupils' behaviour around the school, including at playtime, and had a meeting with a group of eight pupils. I considered seven responses to the staff survey, 31 responses to the pupils' survey and 33 responses to Ofsted's online questionnaire, Parent View. I spoke to several parents on the playground at the end of the day. I evaluated a range of documents, including the school's self-evaluation documents, development plans and senior leaders' records of monitoring of teaching. I looked closely at the school's safeguarding policies, procedures and checks, and spoke with several members of staff to test out their understanding of safeguarding arrangements.