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29 January 2019

Mr Andrew Simpson
Headteacher
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Dear Mr Simpson

Short inspection of Arundel CofE Primary School

Following my visit to the school on 15 January 2019, 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 March 2015.

This school continues to be good.

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

Your school has continued to improve. Standards in English and mathematics at the end of key stage 2 have risen. In 2018, the proportion of pupils attaining the expected standard for their age in reading, writing and mathematics was above average. Similarly, the most able pupils attain well by the time they leave the school. The proportion of younger pupils securing the expected standard in the phonics screening check has improved too. These are commendable achievements. Your clear thinking and diligence have meant that you have maintained the school's strengths since the last inspection and further improved on some of them. That said, there is still more scope to help pupils across the school make stronger progress, particularly in writing. Some pupils do not attain well enough in writing at the end of key stage 1.

You have been thorough and methodical in addressing the areas for improvement identified during the previous inspection. Reading is now promoted well and entices pupils to devour their reading books and develop a love of reading. Younger pupils appreciate feedback from new technology, which tells them how well they are reading. Older pupils form strong opinions and preferences and learn to justify these by retrieving and deducing information. They sharpen their skills of inference well in history. Pupils can be justifiably proud of the work they achieved when commemorating the First World War.

Pupils appreciate the work you have led to refine your feedback systems. The learning council representatives value being part of this work so that pupils understand what they must achieve in writing, and are excited about transferring this practice to mathematics.

You rightly identified that attainment in mathematics in the past was not as strong as in other good schools. Pupils appreciate the opportunities you have given them to build fluency in arithmetic and practise their multiplication tables. Pupils now attain well in mathematics across the school. Your plans set out appropriate strategies to improve pupils' progress further.

You have restructured your leadership team since the previous inspection and welcomed new governors to the school. Everyone appreciates the guidance you give them and the culture of open coaching. As a result, teaching is well organised, imaginative and improving, so that pupils are inspired and want to achieve more.

All leaders – including governors – have an unswerving mission to enable pupils to thrive as learners. Your collective values help pupils to become confident individuals who want to take on responsibilities across their school life. Your design of the curriculum helps them to develop empathy for others' hardship or disabilities and regular charity work cements a strong moral purpose in pupils. Parents and carers particularly appreciate this aspect of the school's work to create a strong sense of family. One parent commented, 'Arundel Church of England School is just that: ACE! It puts the individual child at the heart of all it does.' Others strongly echoed this view.

Safeguarding is effective.

You and your leaders have ensured that all safeguarding arrangements are fit for purpose. Protecting pupils and keeping them safe are rooted in your school culture. Your risk assessments and care plans are thorough, and you constantly adapt your practice to reflect emerging needs. You are quick to take any necessary action and are tenacious in your pursuit of help so that pupils have excellent provision for their care.

Staff understand what to do if they have a concern, and governors retain a clear oversight of this work, checking and helping you to modify work so that you refine aspects further.

Pupils' knowledge and understanding of how to stay safe are highly developed in relation to road safety and online safety. This is because your curriculum design helps them to reflect well and consider risk and how they can protect themselves. Your blogs and newsletters alert parents quickly to new risks as they emerge.

Inspection findings

- Early in the inspection, we agreed to focus on three aspects of the school's work. The first of these looked at what leaders are doing to improve the attendance

and persistent absence of pupils, especially disadvantaged pupils and those with special educational needs and/or disabilities.

- You have set high expectations for all and celebrate success regularly. Systems have been refined to help you analyse patterns in attendance so that you spot concerns quickly and act. Parents are helped to make an effective contribution to plans so that their children attend more regularly.
- Those pupils who need it benefit from the early care offered at morning club to ensure that they are ready to start the school day. As a result, attendance last term improved for the most vulnerable pupils across the school. You have also ensured that more of these pupils achieve better than in the past by refining your appraisal systems so that no child is lost sight of. A few of these pupils need further help to catch up, and you are acting on this.
- Second, we agreed to look at what you have done to improve progress in writing. You identified that, in some parts of the school, pupils' skills in writing are not as strong as in mathematics. Leaders have implemented an agreed approach that is followed consistently in the school. Some aspects of this work are already helping to improve pupils' progress. For example, in early years, the proportions of the most able children achieving well in writing are increasing but you recognise that other children still find writing difficult.
- Staff use assessment more effectively than they did in the past. Your new systems help you to analyse the progress made by different groups of pupils in your school so that you can keep a careful eye out for emerging weaknesses. Staff regularly meet to check pupils' work and identify aspects where pupils need help. Adults say that they appreciate this and sharing work with staff in other schools so that they can benefit from their views too. Some pupils' progress in the school is improving.
- Younger pupils are helped to think first and say their sentences aloud, showing confidence to get started. They want to write because they are motivated by the books they study as a class, such as 'Nibbles: The Book Monster'. Pupils work harder when adults intervene skilfully. At times, a few of the younger pupils can lose concentration and need more guidance to help them work hard on their own. On occasions, some of the most able pupils need more challenge.
- Older pupils appreciated the time given to organise and draw together their ideas across paragraphs before writing Greek myths. Your work on pupils' editing and drafting has been refined so that pupils demonstrate increasing accuracy. Pupils' pride in their written work is exemplary. Handwriting and spelling skills are developed well.
- Your work to improve oracy across the school is evident. Younger pupils retell familiar fairy tales confidently and are keen to use the letters they know to write them down. You have clear plans in place to develop purposeful writing opportunities in your outdoor provision. Vocabulary development is a clear focus across the school and is contributing well to raising standards further. Older pupils in key stage 1 widened their vocabulary when exploring homophones and creating strategies to spell these. We celebrated with a class when a pupil in Year 3 applied the word 'iridescent' from his homework to his historical description of

an Egyptian tomb. I was also impressed when a Year 6 pupil applied 'hellacious' to create effect in her writing.

- Third, we considered how well the wider curriculum helps pupils to apply their English skills. Exciting and well-planned activities grab pupils' attention and make them eager to write. Younger pupils write purposefully, inspired by visits such as that to St Paul's Cathedral. Their use of technology to present work strengthens their informed research. In Year 6, pupils were enthralled by a documentary clip and shared well-crafted writing, using scientific vocabulary and parenthesis effectively to convey the hostile plight of penguins.
- Some aspects of the curriculum are a strength. Pupils flourish and achieve well in sport and music, which provide them with plentiful opportunities to hone their talents. The whole school is right to be proud of these. You are keen to develop your curriculum further, and ambitious to improve progress through your plans to strengthen pupils' reasoning. I agreed with you that this would help pupils justify and apply their knowledge fluently across the curriculum.

Next steps for the school

Leaders and those responsible for governance should ensure that:

- pupils' progress in writing improves, including those who may be falling behind or need more challenge to achieve well
- the younger pupils attain well in writing
- pupils' written skills show strong reasoning across the topics they study in different subjects.

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

Susan Underwood
Ofsted Inspector

Information about the inspection

During the inspection, I met with you, your staff and members of the governing body. I also met with pupils to seek their views of the school, including members of your various council groups. I spoke with other pupils informally around the school. I met with a representative from the local authority to review the school's work.

I considered the 84 responses to Ofsted's online survey, Parent View, including a

further 73 free-text responses. I also considered 18 responses to Ofsted's staff questionnaire and 29 responses to the pupil questionnaire.

I examined a range of documents, including those related to attendance and safeguarding. I looked at the school's self-evaluation and improvement priorities and considered a range of information available on the school's website.

I also visited all the classes and completed a scrutiny of pupils' work in English with senior leaders and considered samples of work in history, religious education and science.