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Mr Stephen Kear
Headteacher
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Dear Mr Kear

Short inspection of William Penn School

Following my visit to the school on 12 March 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 July 2015.

This school continues to be good.

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

You have led the school calmly and effectively through periods of staffing instability and a fall in pupil numbers. Some staffing uncertainty remains as the assistant headteacher is leaving at Easter and her replacement is yet to be recruited. In a small school this has high impact and some parents are understandably concerned about the effects of this turbulence. Despite this, you continue to have the overwhelming support of the majority of the parent body and have sustained a culture of caring and kindness throughout the school. This was summed up by a parent who said: 'This is a lovely school. The passion and hard work from all the staff shine through and they really care about all of their pupils.'

Attainment in reading, writing and mathematics at the end of key stage 2 have consistently been in line with or above national thresholds, including at higher standards. Many pupils now achieve standards above those expected for their age. Key stage 1 attainment is more variable, as is attainment in phonics at the end of Year 1 and the proportion of children in Reception reaching a good level of development. Staff turnover, variable ability on entry to school and very small numbers in each class have impacted on attainment data and contributed to inconsistencies in performance over time. Leaders have correctly identified key priorities for the school, such as raising attainment in phonics in key stage 1 and in writing across the school. Further training has increased teaching expertise and

pupils are now making better progress in phonics and in writing in Reception and in key stage 1. You have very clear knowledge about what is needed for teaching and learning to be effective. When we observed together, we agreed that pupils in early years and key stage 1 need more opportunities to practise their writing independently. You also agreed that in some classes teachers need to raise expectations about presentation and handwriting in English books.

At the school's last inspection you were asked to ensure that pupils are given sufficient challenge in their work. There has been an improving trend in outcomes at the end of key stage 2 over the last three years. The percentage of pupils attaining the higher-than-expected standard in reading, writing and mathematics combined at the end of key stage 2 has risen year on year and in 2018 was in the top 10% of schools nationally. New initiatives in writing and mathematics allow pupils to choose work at different degrees of difficulty, providing good opportunities for most-able pupils to further deepen their understanding.

Middle leaders are becoming more effective in driving improvement since the last inspection. For example, the English lead has raised the profile of writing throughout the school and inspired pupils to write through use of drama. Pupils are excited about writing, having recently performed their kite poems in front of a green screen and shared them online. However, we agreed that there is more to be done to develop the rigour of subject leadership for all subjects, such as more thorough analysis of pupils' assessment information and more regular checking of the quality of work in books.

Governance is strong. The governing body gathers first-hand information to inform its discussions and decisions. Governors work tirelessly to play their part in monitoring leaders' actions well and holding them to account. They bring a wide range of experience and expertise to their roles.

Safeguarding is effective.

Leaders have created a strong safeguarding culture and concerns are dealt with quickly and effectively. Liaison with outside agencies is strong, to support pupils' safety and well-being. When recruiting new staff, all appropriate background checks are made, and information logged and well maintained on the school's single central register. You have ensured that staff and governors read and understand changes in government advice about safeguarding soon after it is published. Governors and staff responsible for recruitment have been thoroughly trained in safe recruitment practices.

The curriculum contributes well to pupils keeping themselves safe, for example when using the internet. Pupils learn to manage their feelings and those of others to resolve conflict and they are confident in speaking up against discrimination of any kind. They adopt positive role models within the school community, preparing them well for the next stages of their education. This has been recognised in national awards, such as the Rights Respecting Schools Award.

Inspection findings

- The focus of this inspection was to look at: safeguarding; how well pupils are prepared for life in modern Britain; achievement of disadvantaged pupils; and the progress of pupils in early years and key stage 1 in phonics and writing. We also agreed to check on the effectiveness of leaders' actions to raise standards in writing across the school.
- The wider curriculum is varied and promotes pupils' understanding of the world and how cultures and belief systems are different. Exciting opportunities are created for pupils to learn in a range of subjects. For instance, pupils in Years 3 and 4 enjoyed an ancient Egyptian day, from which they showcased an ancient ancestors museum, shared with parents and carers.
- Behaviour is good and attendance is in line with national averages. Leaders have ensured that the school's values help pupils become effective learners and model citizens. Pupils helped to shape the school's behaviour policy. They mediate between peers when difficulties arise and older pupils act as mentors to younger ones, providing advice, support and positive role models. One pupil told me that the school values of honesty, integrity, reflection, equality, peace, friendship and simplicity 'can actually help us think things through' whenever difficulties arise. Pupils are proud that their work has been recognised by gaining a national silver award as a Rights Respecting School.
- There are very few disadvantaged pupils in the school, but assessment information at the end of Year 2 and Year 6 and progress information for current disadvantaged pupils shows that the majority make at least expected progress and that progress is becoming stronger. This is as a result of effective targeted interventions and the introduction of reading and writing initiatives in key stage 1 and early years.
- Outcomes in phonics at the end of Year 1 dipped to below national averages last year. Restructuring of how phonics is taught and the use of skilled additional adults to support less-able pupils have strengthened progress. The majority of pupils in Year 1 are now on track to reach the expected standard by the end of the year. Pupils use their phonics knowledge well to read fluently and confidently. While the structured approach to phonics has helped to lay the foundation for independent writing, leaders have recognised that pupils now need more opportunities to use their phonics skills to help them write independently.
- Leaders have rightly prioritised bringing attainment in writing in line with reading and mathematics. In upper key stage 2, writing is of a high standard. Pupils write well and at length across a range of genres. They self-edit and edit one another's work, then use suggestions well to make improvements to their work. Pupils enjoy writing for a purpose. For example, they wrote a guide for parents about conflict resolution, and held an 'X Factor' poetry competition. They spoke enthusiastically about special writing days held in school linking art and writing. However, work in books shows that rates of progress are not yet consistent in all year groups and that not all pupils take care to present their work as well as they could.
- Subject leaders are becoming more effective in monitoring the effectiveness of

teaching and learning in their subjects, to enable them to support teachers and improve pupils' outcomes. This is at an early stage of development, however. For example, monitoring of the quality and quantity of work in English needs to be more rigorous so that improvements are sustained and teachers are held firmly to account for outcomes targets.

Next steps for the school

Leaders and those responsible for governance should ensure that:

- subject leaders check the quality of teaching in their subject and the quality of work in pupils' books more regularly, to monitor the impact of the changes they have made and the consistency of initiatives they have introduced
- teachers have higher expectations of the quality and presentation of pupils' writing, so that pupils make consistently strong progress
- more pupils in key stage 1 reach the expected standard and greater depth in writing by practising their phonics skills when writing independently.

I am copying this letter to the chair of the governing body, 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

Lynda Welham
Ofsted Inspector

Information about the inspection

I jointly observed learning throughout the school with you, spoke to pupils and looked at work in their books with the English subject leader. I took account of the 39 responses, including written comments, to Ofsted's online questionnaire, Parent View. I also analysed responses to six staff questionnaires and 20 pupil questionnaires.

A range of documents was reviewed, including: the school's development plan and self-evaluation document; information about pupils' achievement, attendance, behaviour and safety; governing body reports; reports from the school's improvement partner; and paperwork relating to safeguarding and the school's work with outside agencies.

Meetings were held with yourself and the English subject leader and four governors, including the chair of the governing body. I spoke by telephone with a representative of the local authority. I observed behaviour at playtime and on entry to school. I heard pupils read in Years 1 and 2. At the beginning of the day, I had conversations with parents and carers.

