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Mr Alister Sutherland  
Headteacher  
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Dear Mr Sutherland

### **Short inspection of Patcham Junior School**

Following my visit to the school on 2 May 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 May 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 ensured that the school has continued to improve since you took up your position. Parents and carers, and staff, are positive about the way the school is led. Your partnerships with other leaders are strong, leading to harmonious and purposeful management of all aspects of the school. Parents appreciate the care and guidance staff afford their children. Those I talked to, including parents of pupils with special educational needs and/or disabilities (SEND), were positive about the quality of education the school provides.

Classroom visits showed the school to be a happy place. At the time of my visit, Year 4 pupils were absent due to a residential trip. Despite this, you were able to show me their work, which gave me a strong impression of the good or better progress most are making. This is also the case with other year groups, where pupils, including those from vulnerable groups, are making strong progress in a range of subjects across the curriculum.

Pupils' attitudes to school are very positive. They told me that they enjoy coming to school because teachers plan exciting things to do and make learning fun. Pupils were confident when answering my questions about what they were learning and why. They were also keen to tell me about their differing favourite subjects, including the exciting investigations they undertake in science. They were also positive about the wide range of clubs they can attend during and after school.

At the time of the last inspection, inspectors acknowledged the many strengths of the school. These included the good quality of teaching, leading to pupils achieving well. They also acknowledged that pupils worked hard and that their behaviour was good. At the last inspection, inspectors also identified that in some classes, teachers did not have high enough expectations, and that they were not setting sufficiently demanding activities in writing.

Leaders have addressed these aspects successfully. Teachers' expectations are now consistently high. This is true across all year groups, and directly linked to leaders' expectations of what constitutes good-quality teaching and learning. As a result, outcomes in reading and mathematics at the end of key stage 2 in 2018 were well above average compared with those of other primary schools nationally.

Improving pupils' writing continues to be a focus. At the end of Year 6 in 2018, the proportion of pupils attaining at age-related expectations, including those from disadvantaged backgrounds, compared very favourably with other primary schools nationally. However, pupils' attainment at greater depth in writing was not as good. Because of this, you immediately put in place a number of initiatives, including working alongside other schools and with the local authority. From my visits to classrooms and our joint scrutiny of pupils' work, you were able to show me that current pupils are making much better progress in writing than in the past. This includes pupils who attained at higher levels at the end of Year 2.

Since the last inspection, you have continued the important process of self-evaluation. You were able to explain the school's many strengths, as well as the priorities for improvement. You continue to recognise the need to increase the proportion of pupils across the school achieving higher standards in writing. You agreed with me that improvement planning should be reviewed and further refined, so that it provides leaders and governors with a timelier and more accurate picture of the progress the school is making against key areas that need to be improved.

### **Safeguarding is effective.**

Arrangements to safeguard pupils are effective. Policies, procedures and day-to-day routines are sound, although during the inspection minor adjustments had to be made to the single central record of checks on adults. Importantly, the culture to safeguard pupils is strong. Staff have a clear understanding of their responsibilities. Their training is up to date. They know what to do if they have concerns.

All parents who spoke to me feel that their children are safe at school. The very large majority of parents who completed Ofsted's online survey expressed an opinion that their children feel safe in school. Pupils told me they feel safe because staff care for them well. They also talked knowledgeably about staying safe online, as well as the potential dangers posed in their local environment, such as from roads and railway lines.

## **Inspection findings**

- The school's curriculum meets the needs of pupils well. Leaders ensure that the breadth of the curriculum and the balance between subjects are constantly reviewed. As a result, pupils enjoy coming to school and learning new things. Their work in subjects other than mathematics and English is also of good quality. This includes music, physical education and French, for instance, which are taught by specialist teachers.
- Pupils enjoy the extra-curricular activities the school offers. These include traditional sports clubs for football and netball, as well as clubs such as those for ukulele and 'urban gym'. Residential trips are also popular with pupils, including an annual residential visit to France for pupils in Year 6.
- Pupils from disadvantaged backgrounds do well because leaders give this group a high priority. This includes their pastoral support as well as academic progress. As a result, pupils from this vulnerable group make excellent progress in reading and mathematics, attaining better than other pupils nationally at the expected and higher standards at the end of Year 6 in 2018. Progress in writing was less strong in 2018, but still led to good outcomes compared with those of other pupils.
- Improving pupils' progress in writing continues to have a high priority. This is particularly the case for most-able pupils. Leaders have put in place a number of measures to help achieve this, including giving pupils more opportunities to write across the wider curriculum when appropriate.
- Developing teachers' understanding of what is needed for pupils to attain a greater depth in their writing is having a positive impact on the progress pupils are making. Working in partnership with other local schools to moderate pupils' written work is also proving effective in raising standards in writing. A whole-school approach, including a new writing policy, has given staff more confidence to assess pupils' written work accurately. As a result, current pupils are making good progress with their writing across the curriculum.

## **Next steps for the school**

Leaders and those responsible for governance should ensure that:

- the progress pupils, especially most-able pupils, make in writing increases to match the progress they make in reading and mathematics
- improvement planning is sharpened, so that leaders have a clear understanding of the impact of their actions to improve key aspects of the school.

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

Clive Close  
**Her Majesty's Inspector**

### **Information about the inspection**

During the inspection, I visited classrooms, assessing the progress pupils were making, looking at their books, and talking to them about their learning. All classroom visits were accompanied by the headteacher and the deputy headteacher. I observed pupils' behaviour in classrooms, at breaktime, and as they moved around the school. I met with school leaders, the chair of governors accompanied by five other governors, the office manager, and also with a group of pupils. I talked to parents at the start of the school day and took into account 53 replies to Ofsted's online parent questionnaire and accompanying text messages. I talked to a representative of the local authority on the telephone.

A wide range of documentation was scrutinised, including the single central record, pupils' progress information, the school's self-evaluation, improvement planning, policies, a note of visit from the local authority, and minutes of governing body meetings.