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Dear Mrs Jones

Short inspection of Anstey 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 June 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 successfully through a period that has seen changes both to the make-up of the school staff and to pupils' social and emotional needs. Staff are rightly proud to work at Anstey, sharing with me their highly positive views about the standards of education and welfare that pupils benefit from every day. Adults work effectively to ensure that pupils are prepared well for their secondary school experience, building on the typically very high key stage 1 outcomes in reading, writing and mathematics achieved at infant school.

Pupils at Anstey are happy, safe and supported well. This was evident in pupils' enthusiasm and confidence as they made their way up the path at the start of the day, greeting adults and each other with warmth and courtesy. Parents and carers praise the excellent levels of care, particularly for pupils who are emotionally vulnerable or those with special educational needs and/or disabilities. Responses to Parent View, Ofsted's online questionnaire, note 'the extended hand' that enables parents to be fully involved in their children's learning experience, with lines of communication that are constantly open. The approach supports pupils well in making good use of their time in school, including rich opportunities for outdoor learning. Above-average attendance figures, sustained over time, show how keen pupils are to come to school.

Since the last inspection, leaders and governors have maintained a clear focus on the areas identified for improvement. You have invested thoughtfully in work to raise standards in mathematics and spelling, researching tried-and-tested methods

to find the most appropriate approach for pupils in your school. Improvements in these areas have been more gradual than you might have wanted but are nevertheless evident in pupils' attainment by the end of Year 6. In 2018, proportions of pupils who attained at least the expected standard for their age in writing and mathematics by the end of key stage 2 were in line with the national average, although the percentage working at the higher standard was lower. A dip in attainment in reading last year has been addressed determinedly, with pupils' outcomes improving as a result.

Staff and governors understand the school's priorities for ongoing development, as well as its many strengths. Although pupils usually attain well by the end of key stage 2, this does not always represent strong progress over time, because their attainment at the end of Year 2 is often so high. Current pupils' work shows strong progress across a range of subjects. However, increasing the proportion of pupils reaching the higher standard of learning in reading, writing and mathematics by the end of Year 6 rightly remains an area of focus.

Safeguarding is effective.

Safeguarding is a powerful and effective part of the school's work. The focus on keeping all pupils safe, some of whom who are highly vulnerable, is central to the life of the school. Staff nurture and provide useful help to families who most need it, enabling pupils to attend school regularly and engage successfully with their learning. Work to support families who are experiencing poverty, such as via opportunities for pupils to attend breakfast club, demonstrates the culture of care that is evident throughout.

Leaders and governors make sure that safeguarding policies and processes are fit for purpose, taking account of risks that are particularly relevant in the local community. Useful and timely training enables adults in the school to understand their role in keeping children safe and to carry it out with confidence. Leaders make diligent checks on the suitability of adults who come into school, keeping careful records. This promotes a culture of vigilance across the school. Leaders work persistently to tackle concerns identified by staff, so that pupils get the help they need to keep them safe. Records of this work are of suitably high quality, which helps prevent issues from slipping through the net.

Inspection findings

- As well as reviewing safeguarding arrangements, I spent time looking at how leaders sustain high standards of behaviour, how successfully teaching challenges the most able pupils, and whether current pupils, particularly disadvantaged pupils, are making strong progress, especially in writing.
- Over time, the proportion of pupils being excluded from school for a fixed period has been above the national average. This contrasts starkly with the high standards of behaviour and respect demonstrated routinely by the vast majority of pupils, as noted in parents' feedback and from observations during this inspection. Leaders successfully promote their high expectations for pupils'

behaviour through clear and simple rules that pupils understand: be safe, show respect, be responsible. Overall, pupils speak very positively about standards of behaviour in the school, feeling that pupils are generally kind and helpful, and that any issues are worked out easily, with support from adults where it is needed.

- Leaders use exclusion appropriately, such as when pupils' unsafe or violent behaviour puts others at risk of harm. In these instances, leaders work closely with pupils and their families to address any unmet needs that may have contributed to the behaviour which led to the exclusion. While fixed-term exclusions remain above average, they are declining over time, because of leaders' persistent and sensitive work. Pupils' ability to manage their own behaviour improves because their needs are met more successfully than in the past, including through specialist alternative provision where most appropriate.
- Development work since the last inspection has focused on improving the consistency and effectiveness of teaching across the school. Leaders have identified and established useful strategies and teaching approaches that lead pupils to think more deeply about their learning. Pupils talk purposefully together as a matter of routine, challenging each other's explanations and grappling with things they find difficult until they find a solution. Adults use questioning well to draw out pupils' thinking, encouraging them to consider how to solve a problem, rather than just find the solution. This enables pupils to be challenged more and to use their learning time more effectively than in the past.
- For the past three years, pupils have not made strong progress by the end of Year 6, having joined the school with above-average outcomes at the end of key stage 1. In 2018, fewer pupils reached the higher standard in reading, writing and mathematics by the end of key stage 2 than was the case nationally. Progress in writing was well below the national average, and disadvantaged pupils made weaker progress in reading, writing and mathematics than their peers.
- Leaders review pupils' progress forensically, identifying underperformance and taking action to address it. They are proactive in seeking support from beyond the school, which has strengthened middle leadership and, subsequently, the quality of teaching. Underperforming pupils, including disadvantaged pupils, are catching up more quickly than in the past, because learning in class and additional support is now timely, targeted and therefore effective. This is particularly evident in mathematics and spelling, where development work is more firmly established than it is in other parts of the curriculum.
- Pupils' work shows that the proportion of pupils working at the standard expected for their age is consistently high, and consistently stronger than in the past. However, this does not represent good progress for pupils in Year 6, many of whom joined the school with attainment that was well above the national average. The percentage of pupils reaching the higher standard of learning in reading, writing and mathematics is not improving as convincingly, representing the need for the most able pupils to be challenged even more.

Next steps for the school

Leaders and those responsible for governance should ensure that:

- current standards of pupils' work are sustained and developed further, so that pupils' progress in reading, writing and mathematics by the end of key stage 2 at least aligns with the national average
- greater proportions of pupils than previously, especially those with high prior attainment, reach the higher standard of learning in reading, writing and mathematics by the end of Year 6.

I am copying this letter to the chair of the governing body, the regional schools commissioner and the director of children's services for Hampshire. 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 a range of relevant issues about the school's performance. Together, we visited all classes to observe learning, talk to pupils and look at their work. I met with groups of leaders, pupils and governors, and spoke to a representative of the local authority. I reviewed safeguarding arrangements and information about current pupils' attendance, behaviour and achievement. I took account of survey responses from 16 pupils and 35 members of staff. I also considered 77 responses to Parent View, Ofsted's online questionnaire, including 76 free-text comments, and met informally with a small number of parents at the start of the day.