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Mr Steve Davis
Headteacher
Warden Park Primary Academy
New England Road
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Dear Mr Davis

Short inspection of Warden Park Primary Academy

Following my visit to the school on 12 June 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, along with trustees of the Sussex Learning Trust and governors, share an admirable sense of moral purpose and determination to provide the best possible education for pupils. Staff, parents and carers are highly supportive of your leadership and the improvements being made. Leaders' actions to address the areas for improvement from the previous inspection and raise standards have been successful. One parent, echoing the views of many, commented: 'The headteacher and his team have done an amazing job turning this school and its old reputation around. It is now the school to go to in Haywards Heath.'

Staff understand your ambitious vision. They value the opportunities they are given to develop their professional skills successfully. Morale is high and there is a palpable sense of teamwork across the school. Staff know what they need to do to improve their practice so that pupils' experiences at school are positive. They appreciate leaders' efforts to reduce their workload and the attention given to their well-being.

Your evaluation of the school's effectiveness is accurate. Governors provide appropriate support and challenge to school leaders. They demonstrate a good level of knowledge and expertise, ensuring that they receive appropriate training. They carry out their statutory duties thoughtfully, working well with the trust for the benefit of pupils in the school. For instance, leaders' decision to open a nursery last year provides children with a good start to their education. Now oversubscribed, it

forms an integral part of the strong early years provision.

Pupils are settled and happy in school. They say that school is a place where 'we are cared for'. They learn in a calm, pleasant and well-structured environment where routines are securely established. Impressive displays line corridors and classrooms, showing off pupils' work and bringing alive the range of subjects and activities the school offers, such as French and art.

Parents who responded to Ofsted's online questionnaire, Parent View, were overwhelmingly positive about their children's progress and school experience. Staff know pupils well. This is a strength of the school. Consequently, levels of trust between staff and parents are high, as illustrated by this comment from a parent: 'I am so impressed with the school. All staff are passionate, hard-working, approachable and really care about the children.'

At the time of the last inspection, you were asked to improve the teaching of mathematics. Performance information for 2018 at the end of key stage 2 shows that the proportion of pupils achieving the expected standard has risen steadily over the last three years and is now broadly in line with national averages. However, the proportion of pupils achieving at the higher standard remains below national averages and you recognise that in the past pupils have not always received appropriate challenge. During my visits to classes and looking at work in current pupils' books, standards of work are high in mathematics. Pupils are provided with appropriate resources to support their learning and are regularly set tasks to develop their mathematical thinking and reasoning.

You were asked to monitor standards of behaviour rigorously and improve the quality of work in pupils' books. Pupils' learning behaviour is exemplary, and they behave well on the playground. Pupils say that, on the whole, everyone is kind to each other and that teachers deal quickly with any rare instances of poor behaviour. There has been a declining trend in the number of fixed-term exclusions from the previous inspection. You have sensibly put in place preventative strategies for pupils who require additional support to manage their behaviours. Staff receive appropriate and useful training in behaviour management and apply the revised behaviour policy consistently. As a result, expectations for behaviour are clear to all.

The quality of work in pupils' English and mathematics books is of a high standard. You and senior leaders monitor these closely and often to ensure that pupils are achieving well and making good progress. However, subject leaders' monitoring of work across the wider curriculum is less rigorous. Work in pupils' books in these subjects is more variable and standards are lower.

Safeguarding is effective.

Pupils say they feel safe. All parents and staff who contributed to the online surveys concur. The leadership team, governors and the trust ensure that safeguarding arrangements are fit for purpose. You have ensured that suitable numbers of senior staff are trained at the higher level to provide strong leadership in this important

aspect of the school's work. The safeguarding policy is reviewed annually and includes references to up-to-date guidance on keeping pupils safe. Staff receive regular updates and helpful training. Newly appointed staff receive good-quality induction to ensure that they are fully aware of their responsibilities.

Leaders ensure that great care and attention are given to vulnerable pupils and their families. Concerns are swiftly followed up and the school seeks the support of other agencies, when appropriate, to ensure the safety of pupils in their care. This is a school where policy is firmly put into practice and care for pupils extends beyond the school gates.

Inspection findings

- During this inspection, we looked closely at specific aspects of the school's provision, including: the effectiveness of the teaching of reading and writing; provision to ensure that disadvantaged pupils achieve well; provision for the most able pupils; and how the wider curriculum develops pupils' knowledge, skills and understanding.
- The teaching of reading and writing is a priority across the school. Through careful analysis you have identified that pupils need to develop their vocabulary, so you ensure that pupils have opportunities to read and write widely and often. For instance, pupils enjoy writing poetry, narrative stories and letters of persuasion to the current prime minister. Pupils are proud of the high standard of writing seen in their English and 'publishing' books. Pupils articulate clearly how they improve their writing because teachers provide precise support to pupils about what they need to do next. Through reading high-quality texts in guided reading, pupils demonstrate a growing understanding of the meaning of different words, which they are beginning to apply successfully in their writing.
- You are aware that in 2018 some of the most able pupils did not achieve highly enough in mathematics at the end of key stage 2. Work in pupils' books shows that teachers provide work that challenges and deepens pupils' understanding in English and mathematics. Teachers assess pupils' understanding in these subjects continually. Consequently, teaching is planned accordingly, and pupils are clear about what they need to do to improve.
- The high number of disadvantaged pupils in the school make good progress. They receive effective support from teachers, teaching assistants and leaders to help them catch up with others. You and your senior leaders carefully track the progress of this group of pupils and monitor interventions regularly to check their impact. Provision for pupils' welfare is admirable. The overall care and support pupils receive help them make the progress of which they are capable.
- The curriculum is broad. Pupils enjoy a varied range of learning opportunities, including special days and visits to places such as the Natural History Museum. However, work in pupils' books shows that teaching in subjects such as history, geography and religious education is not consistently well developed. In addition, teachers' assessment of subjects other than English and mathematics is less rigorous. Teachers do not always build effectively on pupils' previous knowledge, and the sequencing of learning is sometimes unclear. Furthermore, work set in

these subjects does not offer a high level of challenge for the most able pupils. For instance, in science, pupils are not skilfully supported to develop their skills of scientific enquiry.

Next steps for the school

Leaders and those responsible for governance should ensure that:

- subject leaders effectively support and monitor the planning and teaching of subjects across the wider curriculum to ensure that the most able pupils are routinely challenged so that more achieve the higher standards.

I am copying this letter to the chair of the board of trustees and the chief executive officer of the Sussex Learning Trust, 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

Frances Nation
Her Majesty's Inspector

Information about the inspection

I met with you, the chief executive officer of the Sussex Learning Trust, the deputy headteacher and the inclusion manager. I held a discussion with the chair of the local governing body, who is also a trustee, and another governor who is chair of the trust. Together, we visited all classes. I considered 27 responses to Ofsted's staff questionnaire together with a letter from a member of staff. I considered 91 responses to Ofsted's online survey for pupils, and 59 responses to Ofsted's Parent View questionnaire, along with 59 free-text comments. I talked to pupils informally about their learning, and met with a group of pupils from Year 1 to Year 6 and discussed their work with them. I scrutinised work in pupils' books with you and three senior leaders. I analysed a range of documentation, including information about safeguarding, the work of governors and your evaluation of the school's effectiveness.