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Mr Alan Gunn  
Headteacher  
The Oaks Primary School & Nursery  
Loppets Road  
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West Sussex  
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Dear Mr Gunn

### **Short inspection of The Oaks Primary School & Nursery**

Following my visit to the school on 17 July 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 lead the school purposefully and with determination to continually improve provision. You have developed a cohesive, knowledgeable and influential team of senior and middle leaders who are highly ambitious for pupils. Leaders at all levels benefit from their collaborative work with The Kemnal Academies Trust. From schools within this multi-academy trust (MAT), leaders meet together to share good practice and update their knowledge. As a result, your leadership team has an accurate picture of what is working well and what could be better in the subjects and areas of the school's work that they lead.

Pupils enjoy school. They are enthusiastic, keen and inquisitive learners. Those pupils who met with me said that lessons are fun and that they make them think hard. Pupils said that they feel safe in school and that bullying is very rare but, if it does happen, staff will always sort it out. Pupils were very clear that the school is a friendly place to be. One pupil, echoing the views of others, said, 'All of the teachers and teaching assistants are so friendly.' Another pupil commented, 'Everywhere you go there will always be someone who'll say hello.'

Most parents praised staff's efforts to provide their children with good opportunities to learn and to ensure that they are fully prepared for the next stage of their education. One parent said, 'My daughter loves the school.' Parents particularly value the way staff support their children to develop good personal and social skills. A few parents indicated that they would like better communication from the school,

and a very small minority of parents do not feel that the school looks after their children well.

Governors have an accurate understanding of the school's priorities. They hold leaders to account well and are aspirational for pupils and staff. Governors closely check the effectiveness of leaders' actions to improve pupils' progress, especially the progress of disadvantaged pupils. Governors are proactive, they have formed positive links with staff and they are diligent in checking the school's work for themselves.

At the last inspection, the proportion of pupils reaching the higher standards was identified as an area for improvement. You have addressed this successfully. The degree of challenge in tasks for the most able pupils is usually appropriate. As a result, more pupils are working at greater depth in reading, writing and mathematics, as well as in other subjects. Since the previous inspection, you have improved the early years outside area. Activities are planned effectively to stretch children's thinking. In addition, the last inspection asked leaders to strengthen the role of middle leaders in the school's development. Subject and middle leaders monitor the quality of teaching and learning closely and accurately. This enables middle leaders to support staff to improve their practice and effectively focus on the gaps in pupils' learning that they have identified.

A key priority is increasing the degree of challenge in some mathematical tasks to ensure that pupils' progress strengthens. Staff effectively probe pupils' mathematical knowledge and understanding in some lessons, but the quality of questioning is not consistently strong. When tasks are not challenging enough, and teachers' questioning does not stretch pupils' thinking, progress is weaker.

### **Safeguarding is effective.**

Leaders, governors, the MAT and staff ensure that the safety of pupils is central to the decisions they make. Staff receive regular training on safeguarding. Consequently, all adults know the signs that may indicate a pupil is at risk of harm. They act promptly if they have a concern, using the school's referral system. Safeguarding records are maintained meticulously. These show detailed recording of the actions taken and how concerns have been followed up. You and the two other designated safeguarding leads are trained in safer recruitment. The single central record of recruitment and background checks on all adults who work with pupils is well maintained, thorough and fully compliant with statutory requirements.

Pupils are taught about potential risks, such as those online, and they learn about different forms of bullying and how to respond. They say they feel safe in school and know what to do if they have any worries. Pupils confirm that they feel able to approach many members of staff for help if they have a worry.

## Inspection findings

- Leaders have ensured that mathematics is taught effectively and that pupils achieve well. Teachers' use of consistent mathematical language ensures that pupils understand what is being explained, and it avoids misconceptions developing. Teachers' careful modelling of calculations is effective in ensuring that pupils know how to complete tasks accurately. Pupils' books show strong progress over time, with evidence of learning in number, calculation, time and shape being embedded. Pupils have effective opportunities to apply these skills in challenging problem-solving tasks. However, in some tasks the degree of challenge does not stretch pupils' thinking. Teachers do not question pupils' understanding sufficiently. As a result, pupils' progress in mathematics is not as strong as it could be.
- Pupils' progress in writing is strong because teachers plan carefully sequenced series of lessons. Pupils develop a good knowledge of punctuation and grammar as these aspects are taught systematically across the school. Consequently, pupils are developing the knowledge and skills to write with technical accuracy. Staff plan purposeful opportunities for pupils' extended writing across a range of subjects. There has been a successful focus on the development of pupils' spelling, and on their understanding of how to structure their writing to improve its quality. The most able pupils use what they have learned from their reading to develop cohesion, and the engagement of their audience, when writing. Work in pupils' books shows that they achieve well and enjoy writing for a purpose.
- Disadvantaged pupils achieve well. Teaching and the use of support staff are planned with care to meet pupils' different needs. Staff intervene effectively during lessons to help those pupils identified as being at risk of underachieving. In mathematics, staff provide regular, precise feedback and guidance to show disadvantaged pupils how to improve their work and where they have made mistakes. This contributes significantly to the development of their mathematical skills. The reading skills of this group of pupils are developed well. Phonics teaching is effective, and pupils use their skills to sound out unfamiliar words. Good-quality texts are used to promote their access to a wide range of authors and genres of book, with texts used well to develop comprehension skills.
- Pupils' attendance is broadly in line with the national average. However, disadvantaged pupils have not attended regularly enough in the past. Your focus on individual pupils who you know to be at risk of poor attendance and the use of external support have been effective. Pupils who miss school regularly are sensitively targeted and supported to reduce absence levels. Leaders use a wide range of strategies to encourage good attendance. These include rewards and the celebration of regular attendance and punctuality. These strategies run alongside effective action to address poor attendance, for example letters to parents and meetings with parents, including external agencies. The 'walking bus' helps pupils to get to school safely and be punctual.
- Leaders have worked effectively to reduce the number of exclusions. Leaders, working with staff, including the family link worker and learning mentors, have carefully identified those pupils most at risk of exclusion. Consequently, the 'triggers' for individual pupils are known well by the whole staff team. This helps

to prevent incidents of poor behaviour. School leaders work well with outside specialists to ensure that staff better understand pupils' needs and know how to manage any incidents that occur, sensitively and effectively.

### **Next steps for the school**

Leaders and those responsible for governance should ensure that:

- teaching and learning in mathematics challenges pupils fully so that their progress strengthens
- teachers' questioning deepens pupils' mathematical understanding.

I am copying this letter to the chair of the governing body and the chief executive officer of the multi-academy 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

Richard Blackmore  
**Ofsted Inspector**

### **Information about the inspection**

During the inspection, I met with you, your deputy headteacher and assistant headteacher. I also met with staff. I spoke with a group of pupils formally and talked to other pupils as I visited classrooms. I had a meeting with two governors and the MAT's regional director of education.

I observed pupils' behaviour in the playground at lunchtime. You and your senior team joined me during the morning to observe pupils learning and look at their work. We also discussed the school's safeguarding arrangements.

I reviewed a range of documents, including: your self-review and improvement plan; safeguarding policy and procedures, including the single central record; and records of pupils' behaviour and attendance. I took account of the 42 responses to Ofsted's online questionnaire, Parent View, and a letter from a parent. I also spoke with parents at the end of the school day and with two parents on the telephone. I considered the 12 responses to Ofsted's staff questionnaire.