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Mrs Lisa Hobby
Headteacher
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Dear Mrs Hobby

Short inspection of Ashurst Wood Primary School

Following my visit to the school on 29 March 2017, 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 November 2012.

This school continues to be good.

The leadership team has maintained the good quality of education in the school since the last inspection. During that time, the school has experienced several challenges. These include unavoidable staff changes, and pupils joining and leaving the school more frequently than is normal. You have, however, in the last year, gathered together a strong staff who possess the right expertise to lead the school to its next stage of development.

Your own leadership is effective. You are suitably ambitious for the school. You make your expectations for the staff clear. You work hard to communicate clearly with parents and you work well with governors and the local authority. Governors hold you to account for your work. They check the school's work regularly and records of their activity show that they challenge you about aspects of its performance which do not meet their expectations. In September 2016, they asked you to explain why the results in writing in Year 6 were so different from high levels of attainment in reading and mathematics. Conversely, they provide you with well-focused support as needs arise. Recently, they have supported your work to restructure the staff and recruit a permanent deputy headteacher. The new post-holder will become, in due course, the school's special educational needs coordinator. This is an important appointment as the number of children entering the school with undiagnosed conditions continues to rise.

Leaders ensure that the curriculum is imaginative and creative so that pupils enjoy

their learning. The curriculum also provides many opportunities for pupils to write at length and in a mix of genres. A few pupils used language fluently and poetically, even when responding to simple tasks. In five of the seven lessons visited, teachers were actively supporting pupils' language development. Teachers challenged pupils to use the correct parts of speech to describe their writing. Teachers also insisted that pupils edited their writing using more complex sentence structures or higher level vocabulary and punctuation. Consequently, the standards of writing attained by pupils in all year groups are consistent with those expected for their age. These standards are not reflected in the published progress outcomes for writing in Year 6 in 2016.

The well-planned curriculum is enhanced by topics that offer rich learning opportunities that encourage pupils to explore the world beyond East Grinstead. The school makes a positive contribution to pupils' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development. Key messages about British values are reinforced by wall displays and other visual clues. A good range of extra-curricular activities such as visits and trips further promote positive learning on the part of pupils.

At the last inspection you were asked to raise pupils' achievement further by improving overall the ways in which teachers deliver the curriculum and accelerate pupils' learning. We agreed that there is compelling evidence that teaching is now secure in all year groups. We also agreed that pupils benefit from teachers' different styles so that they experience a range of methods and strategies. You have created a clear set of basic processes for teachers. These include communicating to pupils the learning intentions for each lesson, and your expectations about how teachers will keep pupils informed about how well they are doing. You have also developed an effective system for checking and monitoring pupils' progress. This easy-to-view booklet of information is helpful to teachers in identifying those pupils who need help to keep up or catch up.

We agreed that success in class and over time, especially in writing, is not reflected in the published information about the school's performance. You showed me samples of last year's work in Year 6. Much of the work matches well the descriptions of what pupils should be able to do at age 11. You are determined that more of this work will be available for assessors this year. You are also keen to find sufficient examples which demonstrate pupils' ability to work at greater depth than is normally expected. All leaders are committed to presenting an array of pupils' writing that confidently matches moderators' expectations so that next year's results will report the strong progress made by pupils from key stage 1 to key stage 2.

Safeguarding is effective.

The leadership team, with the expert help of governors, has built a system for ensuring that all safeguarding arrangements are fit for purpose. The school's administrator maintains a secure record of everybody working or volunteering at the school. You work closely with the appointed safeguarding governor to track that all necessary training is up to date. The safeguarding governor conducts regular and rigorous reviews of such matters so that she can report confidently to the full

governing body that pupils are safe at all times. Other governors contribute to frequent audits of, for example, site security, health and safety considerations and the school's work to help pupils stay safe online.

The site is well-maintained, clean and pleasant. You check that all activities are assessed appropriately for risks. This includes the forest school setting which is a little distance away from the main site. Staff supervise the pupils at break and lunchtimes across the extensive outside spaces. However, the football field cannot be surveyed from the main playground. We agreed that someone should always be on duty there to ensure that pupils are safe at all times. None of the parents who completed the survey, the pupils themselves, or staff raised any concerns about safety at the school. A few parents did comment that they felt that bullying was not always dealt with effectively. I found no evidence that this was the case. Governors concurred that there is more work to be done across the community to achieve an agreed understanding of what bullying is and what it is not. One pupil commented, 'I fall out with my friend lots of times during the day but we become friends again.'

Inspection findings

- The inspection was conducted to check that the school remains good. I explored how well disadvantaged pupils are doing, how accurate teachers' assessment is of pupils' work and, in particular, the standards achieved by all pupils in writing.
- Due to the size of the school and the varying numbers of disadvantaged pupils from year to year, it was not possible to come to any firm conclusions about their progress. You showed me evidence of the work that staff undertake with such pupils on an individual basis to reduce the impact of any barriers to learning. We also agreed that there was a risk that individual pupils might be identified if I tried to report any specific findings. I did find, however, that teachers are rightly taking into account any specific learning or behavioural needs when they plan each day's activities.
- You indicated the focused work you are doing with groups of boys to ensure that they have an equal opportunity to succeed, especially with regard to reading and writing. Boys are engaging with a good range of texts which promote their reading and are taking appropriate care with the development of their handwriting. Not enough pupils, including those who are disadvantaged and especially the most able, demonstrate consistently the ability to work at the highest levels in mathematics or at greater depth in English. A few pupils, and their parents, commented that they sometimes find the work too easy and lacking in challenge. Given their typical starting points, too few pupils attain high scores in end-of-key-stage-2 tests.
- School assessments in all years help pupils make progress. Adults check pupils' learning often in lessons and adjust what they are doing so that misconceptions are not reinforced. Teachers' assessment of pupils' standards at the end of a key stage are accurate. However, a greater sample of pupils' work is needed to support and justify assessment decisions. Teachers need to further develop confidence in their assessment practice.

Next steps for the school

Leaders and those responsible for governance should ensure that:

- teachers strengthen systems for compiling extensive samples of pupils' writing that confidently justify assessment decisions
- a higher proportion of pupils each year work at higher levels in mathematics and greater depth in reading and writing.

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

Dr Simon Hughes
Her Majesty's Inspector

Information about the inspection

You led me on a tour of the school and joined me in observing learning briefly in every class. I observed the assembly. You also showed me a wide range of the school's documents including your own evaluation of the school's performance and your development plan. I spoke with many pupils informally around the site and met a group of six formally. I was not able to consider the views of pupils through Ofsted's pupil survey because none were able to access it. I considered 13 responses to Ofsted's confidential online staff survey and I took into account 51 responses to Ofsted's confidential survey, Parent View. Some parents included free-text responses to this survey, which I considered. I met several parents informally on the playground and took into account one email sent in during the inspection. I held regular meetings with you and also met your early years leader, the member of staff leading modern foreign languages and the school's administrator. I met members of the governing body to discuss their work. I also met two representatives of the local authority.