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Mr J Whitfield  
Headteacher  
Woodingdean Primary School  
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Dear Mr Whitfield

### **Short inspection of Woodingdean Primary School**

Following my visit to the school on 4 May 2016, 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 2012.

#### **This school continues to be good.**

Since your appointment in 2013, you have worked determinedly to ensure the school's values, 'nurturing & believing, enjoying & achieving', underpin the day-to-day life of the school. A stimulating curriculum hooks pupils into learning and the proudly inclusive nature of the school means that no one is left out and pupils are well supported to achieve their best.

You have created a warm, welcoming atmosphere. Pupils greet you and other adults with a cheery 'hello', and demonstrate their consideration by consistently holding open doors for visitors and each other. You are building good relationships with parents, and the community, to ensure Woodingdean is the hub of local life.

The restructuring of leadership has led to greater accountability and emphasis on pupils' progress being a shared responsibility. Phase leaders, who are responsible for each key stage, now have a pivotal role to play in raising achievement and individual progress. Effective procedures to monitor the impact of their work means senior leaders have useful and reliable information about the school. This enables you to make accurate judgements about the school's strengths and weaknesses. Strategic action plans are rigorously tested to check the difference that is being made. As a result, senior leaders are very clear-sighted about what the next steps need to be to secure further improvement. An ethos of team working to secure pupils' progress and well-being has been nurtured.

Together with the senior leaders and in partnership with the governors, you have improved the quality of teaching. This has led to pockets of very strong practice as well as support for staff who need development, so that the vast majority of teaching is now at least good.

Since the last inspection, leaders have effectively tackled the areas for improvement. The most-able pupils are supported through carefully planned lessons and are now stretched by more challenging activities. You have implemented a new assessment system. This is well understood by teachers and teaching assistants and consistently applied, so that information about pupils is used by staff to plan the next steps in learning. As a result, there is a clear focus on the progress of individual pupils and both teachers and pupils know what pupils need to do to improve. Strong leadership in the early years has led to a well-planned curriculum, which gives pupils daily opportunities to explore writing in a range of contexts. This is engaging for all pupils and has captured the interest of boys and girls alike.

### **Safeguarding is effective.**

School leaders have ensured safeguarding procedures are detailed and of a high quality. Meticulous records are maintained and detailed checks made. Robust recruitment procedures are in place. Great care is taken to support vulnerable pupils and staff are assiduous in getting external support if it is required. All staff have been trained and are knowledgeable about how to keep pupils safe, including from radicalisation. The culture of care and respect within the school is tangible and pupils are confident they are looked after well. They know that if they have a problem of any sort, there are always adults on hand to listen and support them. The school site is safe, secure and well-maintained. Pupils are well supervised at breaktimes.

### **Inspection findings**

- Timely actions have arrested underperformance. You rightly judged that pupils were not making rapid enough progress in phonics (the sounds that letters make) and ensured this was a key focus, with all staff undertaking additional training. A whole-school approach has led to improvements. Indications are that more pupils in the early years are now on track to make expected progress.
- You identified that assessment information, particularly in mathematics, was not always accurate. This meant some pupils were not given the right level of work to ensure that they made good progress. The new assessment system helps teachers judge how well pupils are doing. This system, alongside other monitoring and checks made by leaders, has secured accurate and helpful information.
- Senior leaders use information about the progress pupils are making to plan strategically. One example is the additional staffing to support a class where progress has been less than expected. Consequently, these pupils are now improving more quickly. The school's own information indicates that Year 6 will make expected progress, and some will exceed expected progress,

reversing the disappointing results of 2015.

- The governors are an astute and committed group, with a clear strategic focus on school improvement. They are highly ambitious for pupils and share leaders' high expectations. They are skilled in their use of information and hold leaders closely to account.
- Pupils with special educational needs or disability are well supported. Individual programmes boost pupils' learning based on detailed assessment information. The high-quality work to improve pupils' reading recently received national recognition because these pupils have caught up with their peers.
- The inclusive nature of the school means that pupils' self-confidence is developed. As a result, pupils thrive. Pupils' individual needs are identified and met by an effective inclusion team, led by a skilled special educational needs coordinator. As a result, pupils with special educational needs or disability have improved their skills in writing at length, and gained greater confidence in their understanding of number. Leaders check that this work is then continued by class teachers, providing pupils with continuity in their learning.
- The gaps for disadvantaged pupils have largely closed or those that remain are closing quickly. Pupil premium funding (additional funding provided by the government) is targeted to areas where pupils need to catch up and pupils benefit from one-to-one or small group work.
- Leaders have placed a high importance on developing teachers' skills and confidence in the classroom, through a system known as 'The Woodingdean Way'. A newly developed curriculum, introduced this year, has encouraged teachers to plan exciting and stimulating lessons. This has fostered an environment where teachers are keen to improve their own practice and talk about how best to help pupils learn. This has reinvigorated staff. As one teacher said 'It's brought the buzz back'.
- There is still some variability in teaching in Year 1. Senior leaders are aware of this because they monitor pupils' learning carefully. Leaders know where teaching is strongest and swiftly tackle less effective teaching by supporting staff to improve through coaching and additional training.
- Improved provision for the most able means that they are making accelerated progress. Teachers increasingly plan different activities which encourage the most-able pupils to work things out for themselves.
- Overall, pupils make good progress. Pupils benefit from being the 'expert' on their table, which helps them secure their understanding and the school's system of learning partners builds pupils' confidence as they work things out together.
- Considerable improvements have been made in writing. The school has adopted a policy of daily opportunities to write, with additional sessions of extended writing. Right from the early years, pupils are engaged with stimulating materials for writing. The classroom environment has been improved to make it more conducive. Reception pupils were writing about special potions for pirates and Year 4 pupils were running their own news desk, thoroughly absorbed in their newspaper reporting. Pupils' own writing

is valued and celebrated, with examples of pupils' work displayed in classrooms and on the school website.

- Where teachers are skilled in questioning, pupils' thinking is extended. This also provides teachers with valuable information about what pupils know and understand. However, sometimes opportunities are not taken to deepen their thinking.
- Pupils in the early years are well prepared for Year 1. Their daily writing and key learning is developed through carefully structured play and activities, which surprise and delight. Pupils' learning logs record their achievements and celebrate their successes.
- Senior leaders have rightly identified that some teaching in mathematics needs strengthening to give pupils more opportunities to develop their skills in problem solving. Where teachers plan sufficient challenge, pupils make good progress in mathematics. For example, pupils in the early years were able to discuss capacity and accurately talk about doubling and halving.
- Leaders have deployed a range of strategies to ensure that attendance is improving. A weekly total is displayed and pupils are aware of the target of 96%. This expectation features in assemblies and classes compete to have the highest weekly attendance. An emphasis on punctuality means that pupils are keen to get to their classes and lateness has been reduced, spurred on by fierce competition to be awarded Pickwick, the school's punctuality penguin. Leaders work with individual pupils to support improved attendance, such as providing a part-time timetable for those with medical needs. Nonetheless, there are still some pupils whose low attendance is limiting their progress and leaders need to continue to develop links with these families.
- Pupils have very good attitudes to learning. Teachers ensure that pupils are partners in learning and consequently pupils are motivated to improve their own work. Proudly, pupils showed the inspector examples in their books of work that had improved and could explain why it was better.
- In classrooms, pupils' behaviour is excellent. They are fully engaged in their work, supportive of one another's learning and appreciate the help teachers give them. Pupils are very clear about how to resolve any fall outs and help each other to put things right.
- Pupils take care of one another and feel confident they have someone to turn to if they have any worries. Pupils have a clear sense of right and wrong. The school's 'Golden Rules' (the school's code of conduct) is supported by the work that has begun on fundamental British values. Pupils consider bullying to be rare and dealt with quickly and fairly by staff if it does arise.
- Creativity remains a strong feature of the school. There are inviting displays of pupils' work showcasing their studies of the artists Hundertwasser and Miro, and a whole day devoted to studying Leonardo da Vinci. Pupils' social, moral, spiritual and cultural development is supported through opportunities to widen their experiences, for example, through studies in Mandarin and work on Chinese culture, the symphonies of Mozart or democracy through the work of the school council. The inspector also witnessed some lively and tuneful choral singing.

- In the main, parents are supportive of the school and are confident that their children are happy, enjoying their learning and make progress.
- Sports funding is used very effectively to engage pupils. As a result of expert teaching, participation rates are high, with many pupils taking part in clubs and competitions. For example, recently a Key Stage 1 dance club has proved very popular.
- The local authority has provided useful challenge and support for leaders, helping them determine key priorities and scrutinise the impact of their work.

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

Leaders and those responsible for governance should ensure that:

- teachers develop their skills in planning mathematical problem solving, so that all pupils develop a secure understanding of the mathematics curriculum
- leaders continue to ensure that weaker teaching is quickly identified and improved
- leaders continue to develop and sharpen their work to include parents as partners in their children's learning, to improve progress for all pupils and ensure all attend well.

I am copying this letter to the chair of the governing body and the director of children's services for Brighton and Hove. This letter will be published on the Ofsted website.

Yours sincerely

Helena Read  
**Her Majesty's Inspector**

### **Information about the inspection**

I visited 12 lessons, 10 jointly with the headteacher and a senior leader. I spoke with pupils in lessons, met with a small group and looked at some of their work. I observed pupils at playtime and lunchtime and attended an assembly. I met with the headteacher, deputy headteacher and assistant headteacher, and spoke on the telephone to a representative from the local authority. I met with the chair of the governing body and two other members of the governing body. I considered the school's surveys from members of staff and pupils and I took careful account of 59 responses from parents to Ofsted's online questionnaire, Parent View, and the written comments made by parents. I looked at documents, including information about performance management and the quality of teaching, information about pupils' learning and progress, and minutes of meetings.