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Mr Michael Elsen
Headteacher
Sharps Copse Primary and Nursery School
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Dear Mr Elsen

Short inspection of Sharps Copse Primary and Nursery School

Following my visit to the school on 7 February 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 September 2011.

This school continues to be good.

The leadership team has maintained the good quality of education in the school since the last inspection. Together with your deputy headteacher, you provide clear leadership, drive and enthusiasm which motivate staff and pupils to achieve. You and your team are ambitious for the pupils in your care and are passionate to improve both the quality of provision and pupils' attainment. Sharps Copse is at the heart of your local community and pupils and parents are rightly proud of their school and all that it achieves.

Leaders at all levels are actively involved in self-evaluation and school improvement planning. This, together with a clear focus on supporting pupils' personal development and welfare, is a significant strength within your school. Pupils are known well, as individuals, to staff and to each other. Leaders take great care to support all pupils' pastoral development and achievement. Particularly effective care and support is offered to vulnerable pupils. In addition, pupils and their parents told me how much they appreciate how staff are willing to give extra time to enrich and extend learning. I witnessed pupils in key stage 2 happily signing up for extra coaching sessions to help them to catch up or to improve their work. Bright, colourful displays celebrate pupils' work, and others promote aspirational potential careers, particularly for girls. These, together with a popular trip to 'Kidzania', help all pupils to foster high ambitions for their future. One girl in Year 6 spoke for many when she proudly told me, 'The best thing about Sharps Copse is that getting a good education here is going to help me to get a good job in the future.'

During your last inspection, the inspectors recognised the many strengths of the school, including: strong monitoring and reporting to governors; behaviour and safety; a good range of clubs and extra-curricular activities; and good progress by the high proportion of pupils with very low starting points. These continue to be key strengths of the school. The inspectors also identified a need to improve attainment in English and mathematics and to improve the use of new technologies.

Leaders and governors have responded particularly well to these areas for improvement. Working with the local authority and improving your planning has brought about improvements to the curriculum. In addition, you and other leaders regularly monitor the quality of teaching and have provided teachers with new resources and appropriate training. Across nearly all year groups, current pupils are making strong progress in reading, writing and mathematics. Consequently, although many have low starting points, higher proportions of pupils are on course to meet age-related expectations than in the past.

Governors are an enthusiastic and dedicated team with a good understanding of the school. They have recently recruited new members and actively seek and undertake training to strengthen their skills. They are kept well informed through regular visits to the school and via leaders' accurate tracking and assessment information. Your school self-evaluation and improvement planning is particularly strong, has clear targets and is appropriately focused.

You have identified the correct priorities for further improvement and are taking the right actions to achieve them. You have rightly prioritised raising attainment in English and mathematics and are aware that there is more to be done to improve the level of challenge for the most able pupils still further. While you have detailed curriculum planning, there is more to do to ensure that pupils receive greater challenge in science and the wider curriculum.

Safeguarding is effective.

Sharps Copse offers an especially nurturing and caring community. You have ensured that all safeguarding arrangements are fit for purpose and that there is a culture of vigilance. There are clear, well-understood systems and well-kept records in place to manage safeguarding requirements. All staff have up-to-date training to an appropriate level and so they know what to do should they be worried about a pupil. Governors are well informed and work closely with staff to ensure that the work to keep pupils safe is given top priority and meets current requirements. Leaders of other schools have visited to learn about your well-organised and effective systems to protect vulnerable pupils.

Overall, pupils' attendance is in line with the national average. You recognise that some groups, including disadvantaged pupils, have had poor attendance rates in the past. The school actively engages with outside agencies and families to support improvements. Bullying and discrimination are rare. Almost all pupils and parents report that children feel safe and well looked after at Sharps Copse, and they know whom to go to should they have any concerns. As several of the pupils told me during the inspection, 'We feel safe and secure here.'

Inspection findings

- During this visit, as well as evaluating safeguarding arrangements, I focused on specific aspects of the school's provision, including:
 - whether the dip in 2016 results is indicative of current pupils' progress in Reception
 - how effectively the school meets the needs of specific groups, including girls, the most able pupils, disadvantaged pupils and pupils who have special educational needs and/or disabilities
 - the quality of learning in the wider curriculum.
- Historically, the proportion of children achieving a good level of development by the end of early years had improved over time. However, results in 2016 dipped significantly. This was an exception and does not represent a trend. You recognise that an increasing proportion of children enter the school with speaking and language skills and/or physical development below those typical for their age. Leaders have consequently worked hard to improve the quality of provision in Reception and key stage 1. This includes sourcing professional specialist support for the development of speech and language skills, and providing regular 'dough-gym', yoga and 'funky fingers' classes to support children to improve their muscle development and coordination skills. As a result, children make rapid progress from their starting points.
- Strong leadership and effective planning ensures that the indoor and outdoor learning environments offer well-organised, rich and stimulating learning opportunities. Recent investment in improving the outdoor learning areas is also supporting physical development through active play. Children gain confidence from their good relationships with staff and collaborative play with others in their class. They make strong progress and this, together with their improved communication and language skills, is helping them to boost their achievement in reading, writing and mathematics.
- High-quality teaching of phonics helps to foster a love of reading and underpins the good progress that pupils make. In 2016 the proportion of pupils at the end of Year 1 who achieved the expected standard in the phonics screening check was in line with national averages. Nearly all pupils had achieved it by the end of Year 2.
- In 2016, the proportions of pupils achieving the expected standard in reading, writing and mathematics at the end of Year 2 were below average and no pupils were working at greater depth. This is no longer the case. As a result of improvements to teaching and learning and better monitoring systems, a much higher proportion of Year 2 are already on track to meet age-related expectations, particularly in reading and writing. Leaders are aware that more can be done to challenge the most able pupils so that more achieve greater depth by the end of key stage 1.
- The majority of pupils, including disadvantaged pupils, and those who have special educational needs and/or disabilities, make good progress from their starting points in reading, writing and mathematics during key stage 2. Leaders produce highly detailed plans and review carefully the quality of additional help for disadvantaged pupils and those who have special educational needs and/or disabilities. Teachers and teaching assistants work well together to support any

pupils who are falling behind. Effective assessment and tracking systems, together with timely intervention and support, ensure that these pupils make strong progress, in line with their peers.

- Leaders of English and mathematics are a highly motivated and very effective team. They work well with teachers to support their professional development and improve practice across the school. Working with the local authority, they have designed then delivered staff training and introduced resources to support improvements to the quality of teaching. As a result, there are now more frequent opportunities for reasoning and problem-solving in mathematics, and for extended writing and development of grammar in English. However, leaders are aware that there is still more to do to improve the precision and presentation of pupils' work and to ensure that the most able pupils are routinely challenged.
- The school values of 'standards, honesty, attitude, resilience and pride' underpin all that you do. Your praise and rewards system is particularly valued by pupils and they take a great pride in gaining 'Sharp Shark' points for their good behaviour and attendance. As a result, pupils develop a love of learning. They are polite, and their conduct around the site and attendance are both good. They are rightfully proud to come to Sharps Copse Primary and Nursery School.
- There is a wide variety of sporting tournaments, clubs, trips and visits on offer for each year group, all of which are particularly valued by pupils and parents. Leaders have ensured that a broad curriculum is in place, and detailed plans exist for the development of subject-specific skills. However, pupils' books show that not all teachers' expectations are as consistently high in science and the wider curriculum as they are in English and mathematics. Pupils, particularly the most able pupils in key stage 2, are not set sufficiently challenging tasks which require them to problem-solve and think deeply in science and the humanities. Consequently, progress is not yet as strong across the rest of the curriculum as it is in reading, writing and mathematics.

Next steps for the school

Leaders and those responsible for governance should ensure that:

- attainment continues to improve, particularly for the most able pupils
- the quality of pupils' work and the depth of learning in science and the wider curriculum is improved, by giving more challenging activities and further opportunities for pupils to apply their writing skills in a subject-specific context.

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

Matthew Newberry
Her Majesty's Inspector

Information about the inspection

I met with you, your deputy headteacher, other leaders, teachers, and members of the governing body. I also had a telephone conversation with a representative of the local authority. Jointly with yourself and/or your deputy headteacher I visited several classrooms to look at teaching and learning. I looked at a range of pupils' work in their exercise books. I observed pupils' behaviour at lunchtime and around the school and had a meeting with a small group of pupils. I took into account 17 responses to Ofsted's online survey, Parent View, as well as speaking to a number of parents at the beginning of the day. I took note of the contents of a letter received from a parent. I evaluated a range of documents, including pupils' progress information and safeguarding policies, procedures and checks.