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Mr Neil Davies
Headteacher
Sandy Lane Primary School
Sandy Lane
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Dear Mr Davies

Requires improvement: monitoring inspection visit to Sandy Lane Primary School

Following my visit to your school on 12 December 2018, I write on behalf of Her Majesty's Chief Inspector of Education, Children's Services and Skills to report the monitoring inspection findings. Thank you for the help you gave me and for the time you made available to discuss the actions you are taking to improve the school since the most recent section 5 inspection.

The monitoring inspection was carried out under section 8 of the Education Act 2005 and has taken place because the school has received two successive judgements of requires improvement at its previous section 5 inspections.

Senior leaders and governors are taking effective action to tackle the areas requiring improvement identified at the recent section 5 inspection in order for the school to become good.

The school should take further action to:

- increase the number of pupils who achieve the higher standards and greater depth in reading, writing and mathematics.

Evidence

During the inspection, meetings were held with you, the deputy headteacher, four middle leaders, three governors, the pastoral-support team and the local authority's standards and effectiveness partner to discuss the actions taken since the last inspection. The school improvement plan was evaluated. I examined a range of documents, including the self-evaluation schedule. Evidence of the quality of

teaching and learning was gathered through a learning walk and by scrutinising pupils' work. I met with pupils at lunchtime and visited two playgrounds with them. I watched a scene from your key stage 1 nativity play.

I checked the school's single central record and discussed safeguarding with the headteacher and pastoral leads.

Context

Since the previous inspection in November 2017, you have appointed a leader for the early years foundation stage and additional staff to the early years team.

Main findings

Leaders have taken swift and effective action to address the areas for improvement identified at the previous inspection. As a result, the quality of teaching is better and pupils' progress and attainment are both improving. You have brought to the school a determination that all pupils achieve as highly as possible. As one pupil said, 'The school has improved this year and lessons are more interesting.'

You have raised outcomes for all pupils. The improved attainment achieved by pupils who finished key stage 2 in 2018 demonstrates your success in this regard. The combined figure for pupils meeting the expected standard in reading, writing and mathematics increased from 47% in 2017 to 64% in 2018. There was a particularly strong improvement in mathematics, rising from 57% in 2017 to 77% in 2018. Pupils' progress by the end of key stage 2 has also improved, and particularly in reading. Progress in writing is an area for further development, as is the progress of pupils with high prior attainment in reading, writing and mathematics.

Your focused work to improve the quality of teaching, learning and assessment has been the key factor in raising pupils' attainment and progress. You introduced a new curriculum for the teaching of writing and mathematics and trained staff to deliver it to a high standard. In mathematics, you focused on improving teachers' subject knowledge. You have also put in place end-of-year objectives for the core subjects. This has helped teachers understand the required standards. You are working with other schools in your cluster group to moderate writing in all year groups. Carefully planned opportunities for year teams to work together are helping teachers to develop their understanding of what effective learning looks like. This helps them to plan work that meets the needs of different groups of pupils increasingly well. You recognise that some inconsistencies remain in the effectiveness of teaching across the school. Your leadership team, including middle leaders, are working hard to address these inconsistencies. The introduction of a new progress tracker has helped teachers to pay closer attention to the progress pupils are making in reading, writing and mathematics. Teachers and leaders monitor pupils' progress carefully and are more effective in providing additional support for individuals who need it. You identify senior leadership's next step as

supporting teachers to use assessment information more effectively to provide greater challenge for the most able pupils.

The effectiveness of leadership has improved at all levels. You have provided clarity to the vision, values and key improvement priorities. This has helped staff to focus their efforts. Your self-evaluation is succinct, clear and accurate. In partnership with the deputy headteacher, you have developed a strong team approach to school improvement and taken staff with you. Middle leaders are becoming increasingly effective in their roles. They are more skilled at holding teachers to account for the quality of teaching and the progress that pupils make. Middle leaders have led the significant changes to the English and mathematics curriculum and now play an active role in pupil progress meetings. They have received some useful training and development, including the opportunity to shadow senior leaders, as well as some direct support from the local authority's adviser. This has resulted in their solid understanding that achievement will not rise until teaching is consistently good, in every lesson, for every pupil. Middle leaders ensure that teachers keep a close watch on the achievement of groups of pupils, including those supported by the pupil premium. They fully understand that their next priority is to ensure that the most able pupils fulfil their potential.

Governors play an active role in evaluating the school's effectiveness and know the school well. They are passionate about the role of the school in its local community. They monitor the school's performance closely, gathering first-hand information to inform their discussions and decisions. Governors provide you with support and robust challenge. They have in place effective committee structures and procedures and this supports the efficiency of the governing body.

Over the last year, the proportion of children achieving a good level of development at the end of early years has risen from 47% in 2017 to 72% in 2018, matching the national average. This outcome reflects robust improvement in early years. The key actions include new leadership, additional team members and significant training for the early years team. Children have better teaching and learning provision overall. They are provided with more opportunities to develop their reading and writing skills and their independence. Accurate assessments of what children know and can do, along with careful tracking of their progress, ensure that children receive the support and challenge they need to do well. Consequently, this year, children have made much better progress from their starting points.

Pupils are articulate, polite and well-mannered. They listen well in lessons and respect other people's ideas. Their attitudes to learning are positive. Pupils enjoy their work and are showing a determination to do well. However, they would benefit from knowing more clearly what they need to do to improve the quality of their work. Pupils' behaviour has improved. They told me that pupils are well behaved in lessons and kind on the playground. Over the last year, you have reduced the level of fixed-term exclusions to below the national average. This is because you have

established high expectations of how pupils should behave and underpinned these with consistent systems and processes.

External support

Leaders make effective use of opportunities to enhance their school improvement work. Teachers access helpful expertise from beyond the school, including from colleagues in the local cluster group. This improves their teaching and assessment practice and provides accuracy checks for their judgements about the quality of pupils' work. Leaders utilise links with the local authority to support the training of staff. This has been particularly effective in early years and with middle leaders. The standards and effectiveness partner has effectively challenged and supported senior leaders in the school's improvement journey.

I am copying this letter to the chair of the governing body, the regional schools commissioner and the director of children's services for Bracknell Forest. This letter will be published on the Ofsted website.

Yours sincerely

Sir Robin Boshier
Ofsted Inspector