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5 March 2018

Mrs Gillian Pedersen  
Handcross Primary School  
London Road  
Handcross  
Haywards Heath  
West Sussex  
RH17 6HB

Dear Mrs Pedersen

### **Short inspection of Handcross Primary School**

Following my visit to the school on 20 February 2018, 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 January 2014.

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

The leadership team has maintained the good quality of education in the school since the last inspection.

You and your team ensure that the school provides an attractive, well-organised and safe environment for pupils and staff. High expectations, strong relationships and positive staff morale contribute well to the school's friendly and welcoming atmosphere. Pupils are eager to learn and work hard. They are attentive and well behaved in lessons, listen carefully to adults and move around the school sensibly.

You and your deputy headteacher have established consistent and reliable procedures for checking pupils' progress. Improvements in assessment have enabled you and your teachers to identify pupils' individual needs more quickly than at the time of the previous inspection. You and your staff use assessment information effectively to gauge how well pupils are learning and to adjust teaching so that pupils learn better.

You and your team have a clear view of the school's performance. You have successfully addressed the key issues identified at the time of the previous inspection and have appropriately prioritised aspects of the school's work for further improvement. For example, you have rightly recognised that recent improvements in the teaching of spelling are not yet fully established and that inaccuracies in pupils' spelling detract from the quality of their writing.

You have made substantial improvements to mathematics teaching since the previous inspection. Teachers are knowledgeable about pupils' needs and keep a close check on their progress. They use questioning skilfully during mathematics lessons to explore and extend pupils' understanding. Teachers adapt activities well to ensure that all groups of pupils achieve well in mathematics, including the most able.

Your current focus on strengthening pupils' mathematical reasoning skills is securing further improvements in the quality of their work. As a result, pupils are increasingly well prepared to achieve the higher standards in mathematics, particularly in the older year groups. However, you recognise that there is more to be done to ensure that these improvements are fully established across the school.

### **Safeguarding is effective.**

You and your governors maintain well-established safeguarding procedures which are fit for purpose. High-quality and detailed records contribute well to pupils' safety. You and your administrative officer make sure that recruitment and safeguarding checks are completed fully so that pupils are secure. Your safeguarding governor works effectively with you and your leadership team to ensure that safeguarding procedures are up to date.

You and your governors take any concerns about pupils' safety very seriously. You take prompt and appropriate action and work well with agencies such as children's services and the police wherever necessary. Pupils feel secure in school and parents and carers are confident that their children are safe.

### **Inspection findings**

- During this inspection, I focused on improvements in the teaching of mathematics since the previous inspection, the quality of teaching and learning in English, particularly in reading, and how well children learn during the early years.
- Leaders have successfully reviewed, updated and improved the teaching of mathematics since the previous inspection. As a result, teaching builds more effectively and consistently on pupils' mathematical learning. Standards in mathematics have risen in the past few years. They were above the national average at the end of Year 6 in 2016 and 2017.
- In recent months, leaders have focused on strengthening pupils' mathematical reasoning skills. As a result, pupils tackle number problems with increasing confidence and success. For example, during the inspection, pupils in Year 2 enthusiastically discussed how they could use different strategies to solve subtraction problems. Similarly, pupils in Years 5 and 6 had to think hard when solving some challenging problems about angles. Leaders and teachers are now making sure that developments in the teaching of reasoning skills are fully established across the school so that even more pupils can attain the highest standards in mathematics.

- In the past year, leaders have increased the focus on making sure that pupils achieve as well as they should in reading. Leaders have used training well to update teachers in some of the approaches they can use to teach reading skills. They have refreshed and extended the range of books available in school so that pupils are eager to read. Teachers make sure that pupils have regular opportunities to practise and refine their reading skills by reading to an adult, as well as reading to themselves.
- During the past year, leaders have introduced more rigorous and effective approaches to the teaching of phonics. As a result, pupils acquire key reading and writing skills more quickly and securely than before.
- Recent improvements in the teaching of spelling in the older year groups are now strengthening pupils' writing skills as they get older. However, there are still inconsistencies in pupils' spelling, which hinder their progress in writing, particularly in the older year groups. Leaders and teachers are now, rightly, focusing on making sure that pupils pay closer attention to the accuracy of their spelling when completing written work.
- In the past year, leaders and teachers have improved the quality of teaching and learning during the early years. Developments in the use of assessment mean that staff have a more precise view of children's progress than before and are clearer about the next steps needed in children's learning.
- Early years staff provide a wide range of interesting and engaging activities which build well on children's needs. As a result, children make rapid progress and are increasingly well prepared for the next stage of their learning in Year 1.

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

Leaders and those responsible for governance should ensure that:

- recent improvements in the teaching of mathematical reasoning skills are fully established across the school so that more pupils achieve the highest standards
- pupils pay closer attention to the accuracy of their spelling when completing written work.

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

Julie Sackett  
**Ofsted Inspector**

## **Information about the inspection**

I met with you, your deputy headteacher, the early years leader and the curriculum leader during the inspection. I also met with four governors, including the chair of the governing body, and had a telephone conversation with a local authority representative. In addition, I met with your administrative officer and with the governor with responsibility for safeguarding.

I visited 10 lessons, including a number of phonics sessions, with either you or your early years leader. I looked at the work in pupils' books during my visits to the classrooms. I also looked, separately, at a sample of pupils' work with you, your deputy headteacher and your curriculum leader. I talked with pupils during my visits to the classrooms and during the lunchtime break.

I took account of 75 responses to Ofsted's online questionnaire, Parent View, 30 responses to Ofsted's online staff questionnaire and 190 responses to Ofsted's online pupil questionnaire. I reviewed the school's website and considered a range of documents, including your summary of the school's effectiveness, the school's improvement plan and local authority reports. I also looked at documents about safeguarding and attendance.