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Julie Cook
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Dear Mrs Cook

Short inspection of Petersgate Infant School

Following my visit to the school on 17 April 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 April 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 provide inspirational leadership and have gained the trust and respect of the whole school community. As one parent wrote, summing up the views of many, 'The headteacher is personable, enthusiastic and caring towards her staff and pupils. The teaching staff come across as a well-bonded team.' Together with governors, you are successfully managing a period of considerable change as the school roll increases. This has not distracted you from your clear focus on continually developing the quality of teaching and learning, and ensuring high standards. You have developed a culture of high aspiration for all, ensuring that the caring, welcoming and inclusive ethos does not diminish as the school grows in size. You aim for Petersgate to be outstanding and are clear about what needs to improve to make it so. Senior leaders have an accurate understanding of what the school does well and they pinpoint, with great precision, where further developments need to be made. We agreed, however, that middle leadership is not well enough developed yet to have an effective impact on the quality of teaching and learning across the school.

Pupils told me how much they enjoy coming to Petersgate Infant School and that their lessons are fun. They are polite, behave well and are eager to learn. They love many aspects of school life, including trips, gardening, cooking and the chickens. They adore the school dogs, Jake and Murphy, saying that 'The dogs help us stay

calm and learn.' Parents and carers are overwhelmingly supportive of the school, with 100% of parents who responded to Parent View saying that they would recommend the school to another parent. As one parent commented, 'Petersgate is a lovely school where children flourish.'

You have built further on the many strengths highlighted in the previous inspection report, including good teaching and behaviour, and strong achievement in reading. You have also worked hard to address the issues raised at the time of the last inspection. Leaders were asked to improve the effectiveness of teaching assistants. A wide range of training has ensured that teaching assistants' knowledge of how to teach phonics, as well as how to support pupils who have special educational needs (SEN) and/or disabilities, is skilled and reflective. My visits to lessons confirmed that teaching assistants work effectively in classrooms to develop pupils' knowledge and understanding.

Leaders were also asked to improve the teaching of writing. Your work in this area has been successful. In Year 2 in 2017, attainment at the expected level in writing exceeded the national average. The previous inspection report also identified the need to ensure that pupils were given work which consistently provided high levels of challenge. In Year 2 in 2017, more pupils attained the higher standards in reading, writing and mathematics than seen nationally. However, leaders are aware that the expectations of what the most able children in Reception can attain, especially in mathematics, could be higher.

In 2017, the proportion of pupils reaching the expected standard in the Year 1 phonics screening check was below national figures. You are rightly working on improving the teaching and assessment of phonics.

Safeguarding is effective.

You have improved safeguarding procedures since the last inspection. Policies and procedures are fit for purpose and well implemented. Day-to-day routines are secure. Staff have regular training and a strong culture of safeguarding and care permeates the school. A real strength of the school is how well you and your staff know all of the pupils. Relationships across the school are extremely positive. Vulnerable pupils are supported well. As one parent commented about the school, 'It is a safe, happy learning environment and all the staff ensure that it offers the best learning and care.' Pre-employment checks to ensure the suitability of all adults who work or volunteer in the school are fully in place. Leaders have good relationships with other agencies.

Pupils say that they feel safe in school. They are confident that there is always an adult to talk to if they have any worries. Pupils told me that the behaviour of other children is very good and their friends are kind and respectful. As one pupil said, 'No one goes on the sad face in our class.' Pupils could confidently explain how to keep themselves safe online.

Inspection findings

- Leaders have swiftly responded to the results of the phonics screening check of 2017, which were below the national average. Effective professional development has ensured that adults' subject knowledge of phonics is secure. Pupils' work shows that they are able to apply their increasing phonics knowledge to their independent writing. I observed pupils confidently blending and segmenting words appropriate to their age. Pupils whose progress is a cause for concern are carefully monitored. They receive helpful intervention, tailored to their specific needs and gaps. Pupils enjoy their phonics lessons but, during my visits to lessons, I observed that they did not always work as hard as they could. We agreed that this was because, at times, work was not sufficiently challenging as teachers had not considered the pupils' precise starting points effectively. Improving the teaching and assessment of phonics remains a focus for the school.
- My classroom visits, including the scrutiny of pupils' work, showed that pupils are routinely challenged with appropriate tasks across the other areas of the curriculum. Children's work, including presentation, is consistently of a high standard. Pupils are proud of what they do. They write at length in a wide range of subjects. They display positive attitudes towards writing and their work shows increased stamina and strong progress. The challenging key stage 1 mathematics curriculum provides pupils with many opportunities to deepen their understanding through reasoning and problem-solving tasks. Pupils' science work shows that they are effectively challenged to reflect on their learning and make connections with real-life experiences. They are mastering investigative and practical skills, coupled with a secure understanding of key concepts. We did, however, agree that teachers in the early years are not planning sufficiently challenging opportunities to allow children to demonstrate that they are exceeding the early learning goals, especially in mathematics.
- Self-evaluation is accurate. Senior leaders regularly monitor the quality of teaching through visits to lessons and looking at pupils' work. Feedback to staff is specific and focused on the right areas for improvement. You appreciate that the responsibility for bringing about these improvements cannot be vested just in the senior leadership team. You are therefore looking to develop the role of middle leaders further so that they contribute more to whole-school developments. Leaders have high expectations of what pupils with additional learning needs can attain. Provision for pupils who have SEN and/or disabilities is strong and they make rapid progress at Petersgate. You shared with me your detailed trackers for individual pupils who are disadvantaged. The plans aim to reduce the impact of any barriers to learning and ensure that pupils meet age-related expectations wherever possible. The majority of disadvantaged pupils are progressing in line with their classmates in reading and mathematics.
- Governors have a good understanding of the school's strengths and areas for improvement. Their strategic decision-making fully supports the school's key developments and vision. For example, decisions regarding the development of the school into a three-form entry are carefully considered to ensure that the space used to support Petersgate's commitment to outdoor learning can be

maintained. Governors participate in regular training and, as a result, they provide you with effective support and challenge. They visit the school regularly and check that funding is used wisely and is targeting the right areas.

Next steps for the school

Leaders and those responsible for governance should ensure that:

- improvements to the teaching and assessment of phonics are fully embedded so that more pupils reach the expected standard in the Year 1 phonics screening check
- teachers effectively challenge the most able children in the early years with suitable activities, especially in mathematics
- the role of middle leaders is strengthened so that they can contribute effectively to whole-school improvements.

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

Lea Hannam
Ofsted Inspector

Information about the inspection

During the inspection, I met with you and your senior leadership team to discuss the school's effectiveness. Together we looked at the quality of pupils' work in books. You accompanied me on visits to lessons in all classes to observe pupils' learning, speak to pupils and look at their work. I considered 131 responses from parents to the online questionnaire, Parent View, and considered their free-text comments. I spoke to parents at the beginning of the school day, and to a representative from the local authority on the telephone. I met with four governors, including the chair of the governing body. I also spoke to a group of pupils about their school. I evaluated the school's safeguarding arrangements. A wide range of documents were examined, including the school's self-evaluation and school improvement planning, pupils' progress information, the pupil premium strategy, attendance information and policies.