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Ms Jane Clabon  
Headteacher  
Denmead Infant School  
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Dear Ms Clabon

### **Short inspection of Denmead Infant 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 October 2013.

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

You have maintained the good quality of education in the school since the last inspection. Despite significant changes at senior leadership level, you have quickly gained the trust, respect and confidence of staff, parents, carers and governors to provide decisive leadership to the school. Since joining the school in September 2015, you have brought about a sense of energy and enthusiasm and inspired pupils, parents and staff to encompass the school's ethos, 'Happy together, Growing together, Aiming high.' This was reflected in the comment made by one parent who wrote: 'The atmosphere is fantastic, everyone happy, everyone enjoying learning – it's exactly what you want for your children.'

You have supported staff to implement the requirements of the new curriculum and assessment arrangements while developing a strong ethos for learning. You have created a climate in which staff reflect on their teaching and are keen to try out new ideas. This has resulted in improvements to pupils' outcomes that were above the national average in reading, writing and mathematics at the end of Year 2 in 2017. Pupils' attainment in writing was not quite as high as it was in reading and mathematics.

You and other school leaders have a very clear understanding of the strengths of the school and you have put into place actions to address the remaining areas of weakness. You have a thorough understanding of the skills of individual teachers and have provided training to help them to improve their skills further. You work in close cooperation with other local schools and with the adjacent junior school in

particular. This has enabled staff to share ideas and expertise that enhance learning for all pupils. In response to disappointing outcomes in phonics in 2017, you have taken action to improve the teaching of phonics. While this has led to noticeable improvements, you know that phonics teaching is not yet consistently good across the school. You have addressed the issues for improvement from the previous inspection but agree that the teaching of writing could be further strengthened. You are currently developing the role of leaders as changes to staffing have necessitated a review of responsibilities.

There is no doubt that pupils love their school and this is reflected in their above-average rates of attendance. They are happy, they feel safe in school and they enjoy learning. As one parent wrote, 'My children enjoy going to school, they have made some strong friendships and have embraced the strong learning ethos that is so apparent when entering the school.' Pupils are polite and friendly and they get on very well together. Pupils behave exceptionally well in class, in the playground and when they move around the school. In classrooms, teachers provide plenty of opportunities for them to discuss their work and share their ideas and this helps to develop pupils' personal and social skills. Pupils fully understand and respond to the school's short simple rules, 'Kind hands, Kind feet, Kind mouth.'

Most governors are relatively new to their roles. However, they have a wide range of professional skills that they bring to the school and so are able to provide good support to school leaders while providing a high level of professional challenge. Governors know the school well because they visit frequently and they receive good-quality information from the headteacher. They are very proud of their school and value the family feel the school maintains within the local community.

### **Safeguarding is effective.**

You and your governors have established a strong culture of safeguarding in which there is no complacency. All staff, volunteers and visitors fully understand their moral responsibility to ensure that pupils are safe and that they know how to stay safe. You provide regular training for staff, governors and volunteers so that they know exactly what action to take should they have a concern that a pupil may be at risk from harm. You work in close cooperation with external agencies so that pupils and their families get the right support in a timely way. The leadership team has ensured that all safeguarding arrangements are fit for purpose.

Pupils feel safe in school because they know that all adults listen to them and take their concerns seriously. They say there is very little bullying and that there are very few disagreements in the playground. They have a very clear understanding of the need to stay safe when using modern technological devices such as mobile phones, tablets and laptops. They know not to give out any personal information and to tell a trusted adult immediately should something appear that gives them cause for concern. All parents who responded to the online survey Parent View agree or strongly agree that their children are well looked after and safe in school.

## Inspection findings

- In addition to evaluating the effectiveness of the school's arrangements for safeguarding pupils, we also agreed to look at the following aspects of the school's work:
  - provision and outcomes in phonics
  - the effectiveness of the school's provision for pupils who have special educational needs (SEN) and/or disabilities
  - whether or not pupils make enough progress in writing
- Pupils' outcomes in the Year 1 phonics screening check have fluctuated from year to year and were below the national average in 2017. As a result of this, you have taken action to improve the teaching of phonics. You harnessed the support of advisers from the local authority, to provide training for staff to help them to improve their skills. The way in which phonics is taught has been reorganised so that pupils work in ability groups. Most sessions are brisk and lively with different activities planned to meet the needs of different groups of pupils. In most classes, trained teaching assistants skilfully lead small groups of pupils and this helps most pupils to progress well.
- Not all pupils make rapid enough progress when learning phonics. This is because there remain some inconsistencies in the way in which phonics is taught. In some classes, pupils do not consolidate their knowledge of sounds by routinely using their knowledge to read words and sentences containing those sounds. Consequently new learning is not secured. There are times when the most able pupils can already read words given and are not challenged to move on to harder work quickly enough.
- Following the departure of the previous special educational needs coordinator, you now lead the provision for pupils who have SEN and/or disabilities. You have restructured the provision for these pupils so that teachers are responsible for their progress. Class teachers are now accountable for identifying the specific weaknesses their pupils may have. In discussion with you, teachers plan a programme of work that is especially tailored to pupils' individual needs. Pupils who have SEN and/or disabilities may receive extra support from trained teaching assistants who help them to understand what they are to learn. At other times, pupils may be given a planned programme of work that helps them to overcome their difficulties and helps them to catch up with their classmates. As a result of these interventions, pupils who have SEN and/or disabilities make good progress.
- You have a thorough understanding of all aspects of special educational needs and provide good leadership of this aspect of the school's work. You monitor pupils' progress and adjust the support as necessary. You demonstrate an excellent understanding of the needs of vulnerable pupils and make sure that their needs are met. You have built effective working relationships with external specialists including speech and language therapists, educational psychologists and behaviour support workers to enhance the quality of provision for pupils. You recognise that although most teaching assistants provide good support to pupils, there are times when they do too much for the pupils instead of helping pupils to

develop independence and resilience.

- One of the actions taken by the English leader to raise standards in writing has been to introduce inspiring class texts to stimulate pupils' imaginations and inspire them to write. During the inspection, pupils in Year 2 listened to the teacher reading part of 'The Day the Crayons Quit' by Drew Daywalt. Pupils then wrote sentences describing how they thought different coloured crayons might feel if they were used too much or not at all. This generated some interesting ideas and allowed pupils to use their imagination to create sentences on small whiteboards in preparation for writing. All pupils thoroughly enjoyed this activity, which gave them the opportunity to practise and reinforce their writing skills.
- Work in pupils' books shows that by Year 2, most have a neat handwriting style and they use spelling and punctuation accurately. However, their writing shows limited use of interesting vocabulary such as adverbs and adjectives to help them to express their ideas more clearly. This is because pupils do not see and discuss enough examples of published writing to help them to build their vocabulary. Although the curriculum is rich and broad, pupils do not all write at length when learning other subjects. This limits the amount of time they have to practise their writing skills in different subjects. There are times when adults do not always help pupils extend their ideas by asking questions that probe their understanding and deepen their thinking.

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

Leaders and those responsible for governance should ensure that:

- phonics is taught to a consistently high standard across the school
- pupils develop a rich vocabulary and have opportunities to write more extensively when learning other subjects
- all adults extend pupils' ideas by asking questions that probe their understanding and deepen their thinking.

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

Joy Considine  
**Ofsted Inspector**

### **Information about the inspection**

I visited classrooms in the early years and key stage 1 with you or your acting deputy headteacher to observe teaching and learning. I briefly visited the playground at lunchtime and I spoke with a small group of pupils. I met with school leaders and governors, and I held a telephone discussion with an adviser from the

local authority. I took into account the views of parents by analysing 44 responses to the online survey, Parent View. I also considered 37 written responses recorded on free-text. I looked at a range of documentation, including records relating to safeguarding, school development plans and pupils' assessment information. There were too few responses to the pupil or staff survey to take into account.