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Mr James Freeston
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Dear Mr Freeston

Short inspection of King Offa Primary Academy

Following my visit to the school on 20 June 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 May 2014.

This school continues to be good.

The leadership team has maintained the good quality of education in the school since the last inspection. Based on the evidence gathered during this short inspection, I am of the opinion that the school has demonstrated strong practice and marked improvement in specific areas. This may indicate that the school has improved significantly overall. Therefore, I am recommending that the school's next inspection will be a section 5 inspection.

Senior leaders, governors and the leaders of the academy trust all have very high expectations for this school. You all work with great determination to make the school the best it can be. You have invested wisely in further strengthening the leadership capacity in the school. As a result, leaders are continually being developed and given opportunities to take on greater responsibility. Senior leaders' actions have brought about significant improvements to the school since the last inspection.

Pupils make very strong progress in reading, writing and mathematics. At the end of 2017, rates of progress in reading, writing and mathematics at the end of Year 6 were well above those seen nationally. Progress in mathematics has been particularly strong for the past two years. The proportion of pupils who achieved the expected standard in reading was in line with the national average, but above national figures in writing and mathematics. However, you understand the need to enable even more pupils to achieve the higher standard in these subjects, particularly writing.

At the end of key stage 1, the proportion of pupils who achieved the expected standard in reading, writing and mathematics was well above the national average, although the proportion who achieved the greater depth standard was lower than that seen nationally. Pupils currently in school are making strong progress and a greater proportion are on track to achieve these higher standards this year. Pupils from disadvantaged backgrounds make similar rates of progress to others in school and, even more positively, faster progress than other pupils nationally. Disadvantaged pupils currently in the school typically attain in line with their non-disadvantaged peers.

Pupils love coming to school. Strong relationships between staff and pupils, and a rich curriculum, underpin pupils' very positive attitudes to learning. Teachers have high expectations and pupils work hard to achieve their best. This addressed one of the areas that inspectors asked leaders to improve at the previous inspection.

Children make a strong start in the early years and achieve well across the curriculum, because they are taught by well-trained staff. The extensive outdoor area is a treasure trove of exciting learning opportunities for children.

The school's 'Paragon' curriculum provides pupils with a wide range of interesting and challenging activities. Humanities lie at the heart of this curriculum. Starting with challenging questions, such as 'Why do people create art?' and 'How can we tell what a culture values?' pupils embark on a fascinating journey through history, visiting different times and civilizations in chronological order. Parents, carers, staff and pupils all speak highly about the way that the curriculum interests and excites pupils, giving them a strong appetite for learning new things. This leads to pupils acquiring good-quality knowledge and understanding through enjoyable learning experiences. These include visits to such places such as Herstmonceux, Bodiam Castle and Preston Manor. Visitors also work with pupils to bring their learning to life. During the inspection, Year 5 enjoyed listening to the memories of a former evacuee. Homework supplements and deepens pupils' learning. There is a clear, well-understood homework policy that is valued by parents and pupils alike. This successfully tackled the second area that inspectors asked leaders to improve at the previous inspection.

The development of pupils' character and personal qualities is central to senior leaders' and governors' vision for the school. One parent recognised this when they said that the school 'is shaping our future generation into interested, educated and well-rounded groups of individuals'. Teachers understand the importance of developing high levels of aspiration in pupils, so they arrange for people such as paramedics, television producers and storytellers to visit the school to work with pupils. Pupils also benefit from the opportunities to take on roles of responsibility.

Parents are overwhelmingly positive about the school, and the way that it looks after pupils and helps them to achieve well. Any issues that are raised with staff are dealt with swiftly and effectively. One parent echoed the views of many when they said of their son: 'His progress and love of school has exceeded my expectation and it's down to his teachers for their positive attitude towards him.'

Safeguarding is effective.

Senior leaders have built a strong safeguarding culture in the school. All safeguarding arrangements are fit for purpose. Staff have regular training and updates, so everyone understands clearly how to take good care of pupils. All staff know how to recognise signs that a pupil may be at risk and report their concerns promptly. Leaders engage with the appropriate external agencies when a pupil is vulnerable. Consequently, pupils are safe in school. They rightly trust the friendly, caring staff to look after them.

Pupils have a strong understanding of bullying in its different forms, including cyber bullying. Even young pupils can explain how bullying is different to occasional fallings out. Bullying rarely happens, but it is quickly nipped in the bud when it does occur. The playground is a friendly place to be because pupils are typically thoughtful and considerate towards each other, including when playing football and energetic games. Pupils learn how to stay safe in a wide range of situations, including around water, in the sun and on the road. They have a good understanding of the risks of being online and how to avoid these.

Governors play a vital role in monitoring important aspects of safeguarding. They ensure that the right checks have been carried out before people are allowed to work in the school. Governors carry out thorough audits of safeguarding and health and safety practice in the school.

Inspection findings

- You have introduced a number of initiatives to enable more pupils to achieve the higher standards in reading and writing. Teachers immerse pupils in books and texts that are rich in vocabulary and ideas. These books give pupils an appetite for reading and have helped them to become more accomplished, accurate, imaginative writers. The school's reading scheme also contains a competitive element, which encourages the more reluctant pupils to read regularly. Once they have acquired the habit of reading, this often develops into a love of books that enables pupils to be successful in both reading and writing. However, you recognise that fewer pupils achieve the greater depth standard in writing than in reading and mathematics.
- Leaders have worked hard to inspire boys with a love of reading and writing, and have wisely invested in a wide selection of books that appeal particularly to boys. Boys now offer teachers suggestions for books that they would like to have in school, often written by authors they have enjoyed. Teachers also adjust tasks to draw on boys' interest and inspire them to write.
- Boys' levels of attainment in writing have improved sharply this year. No boys achieved the greater depth standard at the end of key stage 2 in the past two years, but this year the proportion is likely to be closer to the national average. In some year groups, more boys than girls are achieving this higher standard.
- The teaching of mathematics enables pupils, including the most able, to achieve

well in the subject. Teachers have high levels of expectation and insist that pupils give full and accurate answers when responding to teachers' questions. Other pupils listen very carefully and show consideration and patience, because they know that they could be the next person chosen to answer. This approach means that pupils are always ready with an answer and think all the time.

- Pupils set their own level of challenge and work hard to achieve their best. Teachers provide regular opportunities for the most able pupils to solve challenging problems and explain their mathematical reasoning. In turn, pupils grow to become curious and ask their own questions. Work in pupils' books is presented to a very high standard.
- The proportion of pupils who achieved the greater depth standard in mathematics was well below the national average at the end of key stage 1 in 2017, especially for the most able pupils. However, as a result of improvements in teaching, outcomes this year are on track to improve sharply.
- We also looked at the effectiveness of leaders' and governors' actions to improve attendance and reduce persistent absence, including for disadvantaged pupils and those who have special educational needs (SEN) and/or disabilities. After several years when levels of attendance have been too low and persistent absence too high, leaders have taken strong and decisive action to improve this weakness. As a result, attendance has improved significantly this year, and is in line with the recent national average. Disadvantaged pupils and pupils who have SEN and/or disabilities also attend school much more regularly.

Next steps for the school

Leaders and those responsible for governance should ensure that:

- improvements in the teaching of writing are fully embedded and strengthened so that a greater proportion of pupils achieve the higher standard.

I am copying this letter to the chair of the governing body, the chief executive officer of the multi-academy trust, the regional schools commissioner and the director of children's services for East Sussex. This letter will be published on the Ofsted website.

Yours sincerely

Bruce Waelend
Ofsted Inspector

Information about the inspection

I met with you and other leaders, including the head of school and the assistant headteacher, to discuss various aspects of the school's work. I also had meetings with three members of the governing body and the chief executive of the academy trust. I visited classes in all year groups with the assistant headteacher and other leaders to observe teaching and learning, to talk to pupils and look at their work. I observed pupils' behaviour around the school, including at playtime. I also held a meeting with 10 pupils drawn from Years 2 to 6. I considered 17 responses to the staff survey and 46 responses to Ofsted's online questionnaire, Parent View, as well as speaking to several parents at the beginning of the day. A range of documents, including the school's self-evaluation documents, school improvement plans, and safeguarding policies, procedures and checks, were also taken into account.