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Mr Julian Grant
Headteacher
Sackville School
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Dear Mr Grant

Short inspection of Sackville School

Following my visit to the school on 10 January 2019 with Ofsted Inspectors Patricia Slonecki and Anne Turner, 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 March 2015.

This school continues to be good.

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

You have continued to develop and strengthen senior and middle leadership of the school. You have nurtured a cohesive leadership team. Leaders follow your example, demonstrating a tangible sense of purpose and commitment to every pupil having a successful and happy experience of education at your school. Overall, pupils continue to make strong progress across all subjects.

Pupils are well mannered, good-humoured and very welcoming. They are loyal to, and proud of, their school. Pupils interact positively across different year groups. In meetings with inspectors they listened to each other's views respectfully. They are very appreciative of the support and encouragement they receive from members of staff. They especially cite additional sessions to help them with aspects of their work they find more difficult. Pupils are attentive to their teachers, collaborate well and are keen to learn. They value the school as a community in which all are accepted and respected.

Leaders recognise accurately and realistically the strengths of the school and those areas that need to be better. Leaders are reflective, and persevere, refining strategies that they find do not have the intended impact of improvement. For example, the school's intensive support for individual pupils helps them to overcome the barriers to their learning. However, overall the persistent absence of

disadvantaged pupils remains well above average and this continues to be a priority and a challenge for leaders.

Parents who completed Parent View, the online survey, were overall very positive about the school. Parents especially highlight the smooth, well-managed transition their children experienced from primary school so that they settled happily and confidently at Sackville. Parents praise the strong, approachable and responsive leaders, whose commitment is reflected by staff. One parent expressed typically that 'the teachers go above and beyond on a regular basis'. Parents also highly appreciate the support for pupils with special educational needs and/or disabilities (SEND). One parent commented, reflecting the views of others, that leaders have 'created an ethos that allows every child to be valued'.

Staff who completed the survey for this inspection expressed their strong support of the school's leadership. They value the professional development they receive in their roles. The very large majority of responses indicated their agreement that leaders do all they can to ensure that the school has a motivated, respected and effective teaching staff.

Safeguarding is effective.

Leaders ensure that the arrangements for safeguarding pupils are fit for purpose. The single central record is well organised and demonstrates leaders' meticulous approach to ensuring that all the required checks of staff are made.

Leaders, including governors, are knowledgeable about local and national risks to pupils. Staff liaise well with outside agencies, including the police, to make sure that safeguarding concerns are followed up swiftly. Pupils state that they feel safe in school. Parents and staff who responded to surveys agree that children are safe in the school.

Leaders have boosted awareness of mental health concerns. Staff have been trained as mental health first aiders and are readily available to support pupils who are feeling anxious.

Inspection findings

- We agreed to consider leaders' actions to ensure that disadvantaged pupils achieve their potential. In 2018, overall, disadvantaged pupils did not achieve as well as in previous years, their progress and attainment being well below the national averages for all pupils.
- Leaders, including governors, place utmost priority on inclusion and ensuring that disadvantaged pupils have the opportunity to engage productively with their education. A strategy group, set up since the previous inspection, meets regularly and considers what each disadvantaged pupil needs to enable them to fulfil their potential. Additional and effective interventions are put in place for individuals if they are falling behind. This includes the increasingly accessible support with mental health issues as well as extra help with academic work.

- Leaders have high expectations that all teachers are clear on the difficulties that individual disadvantaged pupils have to overcome. As a result, teachers routinely provide the right levels of support and challenge for disadvantaged pupils to enable them to make better progress.
- Governors keep a close eye on the expenditure of the pupil premium funding so that the proportion of pupils who take part in extra-curricular opportunities is increasing. Governors are also highly considerate of specific support individual pupils need with challenging personal circumstances.
- While last year's results for disadvantaged pupils were disappointing overall, there are clear indications of individual successes. Disadvantaged pupils generally over time make progress at levels similar to their peers nationally. The attainment of most-able disadvantaged pupils is especially strong.
- We also agreed to look at leaders' actions to improve pupils' attendance. This was because, while overall attendance is generally in line with the national average, levels of disadvantaged pupils' persistent absence continue to be too high.
- Leaders have launched a range of initiatives to improve pupils' attendance. Actions include staff prioritising follow-up when a disadvantaged pupil is absent, and the use of the school's attendance minibus to collect pupils when necessary. Staff look carefully at the reasons pupils are absent too often from school to identify the best way of helping them to improve.
- Strong leadership, a dedicated attendance team, plenty of support for individual pupils and their families and close liaison with outside agencies mean that some pupils improve their attendance. However, despite these efforts and regularly revised strategies, the proportion of disadvantaged pupils who are persistently absent remains too high.
- As a third line of enquiry, we looked at how well leaders ensure that pupils access a curriculum that enables them to be well prepared for their future education, employment and wider experiences. In particular, we agreed to consider pupils' personal, social, health and economic (PSHE) education, an area for improvement at the previous inspection.
- The leaders go to great lengths to ensure that pupils access a curriculum that meets individual needs and interests. Bespoke packages for some pupils, sometimes including work experience, improve their engagement with their learning. Leaders are proactive in ensuring that all pupils study a broad range of topics that will be helpful to them in the future. The Year 9 humanities course is particularly valuable for all pupils alongside their GCSE option choices made in Year 8.
- You are currently revising your curriculum to specify further the knowledge, concepts and themes to be taught across different subjects and year groups. This will include highlighting cross-curricular links to provide more opportunities for pupils to develop and apply their subject knowledge.
- Leaders have given careful thought to the right programme to ensure that pupils receive the right, age-appropriate guidance on their health and well-being. This academic year, leaders introduced a structured programme, delivered in tutor

times, to cover a range of topics relevant to pupils' personal development. These sessions are enhanced by the existing assembly programme and themed enrichment days. Leaders rightly provide the training, support and resources needed to boost tutors' confidence in areas in which they are non-specialists.

- The PSHE programme is in the early stages of becoming embedded and the impact is seen especially among younger pupils who readily recall and apply themes covered. There remains some vagueness among older pupils regarding important contemporary safeguarding issues about which they should be more keenly aware.
- Finally, we agreed to consider the effectiveness of leaders' actions to improve pupils' skills in numeracy and in grammar, punctuation and spelling. This was an area for improvement from the previous inspection report.
- You responded swiftly by developing leaders' roles of responsibility for these areas. You ensure that there is a clear strategy for the application of numeracy skills and the promotion of literacy across the curriculum. Through leaders' clear expectations, monitoring, review and staff training, substantial improvements have been made in these areas.
- Leaders have reviewed the curriculum and identified where pupils need to apply their numeracy skills. Staff development and shared good practice ensure that teachers and teaching assistants are clear on a common approach to how numbers are used in different subjects. Staff are more confident in delivering number-based aspects of their subjects, and pupils are clearer on how mathematical terminology is used across the curriculum. Similarly, leaders have developed coherent and effective systems for teachers to use to help pupils improve their grammar, punctuation and spelling.
- Leaders' regular monitoring means that they have an accurate view of the strengths and areas for development within and between departments. When leaders' raised expectations are met, pupils make better progress. Pupils are clear on ways in which they have improved their spelling because of guidance from their teachers. However, when there is some variation in how well teachers adhere to the school's systems, pupils' errors persist, including the misspelling of technical terminology.

Next steps for the school

Leaders and those responsible for governance should ensure that:

- the most effective strategies are identified and implemented to reduce the overall persistent absence of disadvantaged pupils
- the PSHE programme is fully established and that older pupils, especially in the sixth form, catch up on any themes they missed in previous years
- best practice in the development of pupils' literacy skills extends across the school.

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

Amanda Carter-Fraser
Her Majesty's Inspector

Information about the inspection

Inspectors held meetings with school leaders, members of the governing body, including the chair of governors, and a representative of the local authority. Inspectors visited classrooms, accompanied by senior leaders, to observe the learning that was taking place. We observed pupils' behaviour in and between lessons, at breaktime and lunchtime. We met with groups of pupils and held informal conversations with staff and pupils around the school.

Inspectors looked at pupils' work. We scrutinised a range of documentation including: the school's self-evaluation; records relating to the allocation of the pupil premium funding; published and the school's own achievement information; case studies relating to pupils' attendance and safeguarding; and further safeguarding documentation, including the single central record.

Inspectors evaluated the surveys completed by 83 members of staff and 101 pupils. We also considered the 187 responses, including the free-text comments, on Parent View, the online survey.