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20 March 2019

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Dear Dr Jarvis

Short inspection of Bersted Green Primary School, Bognor Regis

Following my visit to the school on 5 March 2019, 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 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 lead the school with a strong sense of purpose and clear direction. Over the last four years you have skilfully and successfully guided Bersted Green as it has expanded to become an all-through primary provision from Reception to Year 6. Your senior leaders share your high expectations and are well supported in carrying out their roles. Staff are proud to work at the school and are committed to providing the best opportunities to ensure pupils' success.

You, along with senior leaders, know the school well. You have a realistic view of the school. You have achieved a lot but know there is still more to do. You take decisive action to overcome weaknesses and are clear on the priorities to move the school forward. You actively seek challenge from a range of partners and value the support of local authority officers, who check evaluations of the school's effectiveness and identify where further action is required. You engage with a number of research projects and you use these to inform future developmental work. Your 'outward view' is supporting the improvement seen in many areas of the school's work over recent years. However, although middle leaders are enthusiastic and have implemented a range of initiatives, they now need to check on the impact of their actions with further precision.

Governors are aware of the challenges that leaders have faced as the school has grown. Governors work closely with leaders and carry out different monitoring activities to help them understand how well the school is doing. Governors have a range of relevant skills and expertise that they use to hold leaders accountable for the quality of education.

Pupils are very positive about Bersted Green. They are enthusiastic about the support they are given when they find learning difficult. They feel they are challenged and they like the way teachers make learning fun and interesting. For example, during the inspection Chichester Festival Theatre was running a Shakespeare workshop. Pupils were fully engaged and really appreciated the opportunity to work with professional actors. Because of the effort put in to make learning engaging, pupils enjoy learning and their behaviour is positive. Relationships across the school are very strong both in the classroom and at play times. Staff and pupils get on well. Pupils get on well with one another. One pupil said, 'Everyone is really welcoming; it is like your second home.'

At your previous inspection, you were asked to raise pupils' achievement by ensuring that teachers always give pupils activities which enable them to gain a secure and thorough knowledge and understanding of the topics they study. You have ensured that the curriculum is engaging. Your topics have 'stunning starts' and activities that encourage pupils to gain a good understanding of what is taught. To ensure that knowledge is secure, pupils also receive additional support to help them; for example, speech and language programmes and the introduction of a small nurturing 'morning club' for pupils who find settling in more challenging. This approach builds confidence and ensures that pupils can fully engage with their learning. Because of your work, achievement has improved over the last three years.

Leaders were also asked to enable staff to improve their teaching by sharing effective practice more widely. You have created a very positive culture of developing good practice across the school. Work on research projects has enhanced provision further and given opportunities for staff to develop their practice together. Teaching seen throughout the inspection and outcomes seen in books would indicate that leaders have been successful in this work.

Safeguarding is effective.

Leaders have ensured that all safeguarding arrangements are strong at Bersted Green. Arrangements for the safe recruitment of staff are robust. Key safeguarding issues are addressed through regular staff training and updates. Records for the most vulnerable pupils are stored confidentially and concerns are dealt with in a timely manner. Governors are equally vigilant and regularly check the school's safeguarding work.

Pupils were keen to tell me that they felt safe at school. This view was shared by the vast majority of parents. Pupils conduct themselves appropriately, and across the school relationships are warm and respectful. Pupils and parents enjoy the free

'Bagel Breakfast' provided by the school to ensure a positive start to the day. Pupils are happy to talk to staff if they have a problem: 'If sad you can go to any adult,' said one pupil. Pupils are aware of what constitutes bullying and say that incidents are rare, and staff resolve any issues swiftly. Parents spoken to in the morning were equally as positive about the school's openness. One said, 'This is a fantastic school: they really listen.'

Inspection findings

- For my first key line of enquiry, I wanted to find out whether leaders are successfully improving pupils' attendance and reducing fixed-term exclusions. This is because in 2018 the attendance rate was below the national average and the exclusion rate was above this measure.
- With regard to attendance, you have refocused staff roles to ensure that non-attendance is checked regularly. You have introduced rewards for high attendance and alongside this you have worked with families to ensure they know how important it is for pupils to come to school every day. You provide additional support for families where attendance is a concern and have introduced penalty fines when families do not respond to this support. Although you know there is more to do in this area, attendance has improved and is now in line with similar schools.
- You have also focused on reducing fixed-term exclusions. You have reviewed your behaviour policy and ensured that it is consistently followed. You have ensured that your curriculum is engaging and exciting and you have developed an early morning nurture group. Because of this, fixed-term exclusions have reduced and there have been none in the current school year.
- My second line of enquiry focused on the provision in the early years. Does it enable children to achieve their best? This is because the proportion of children reaching a good level of development by the end of Reception, although improving over the past three years, is still below the national average.
- I visited the early years together with your deputy headteacher to check the quality of provision. Because the classrooms are well organised, children are able to select activities independently and sustain their concentration when working on a task. Children work well together. For example, two boys happily sat at the table writing independently, discussing their work. Relationships are positive and teachers and teaching assistants use skilled questions to develop vocabulary skills when, for example, making pancakes for Shrove Tuesday.
- Records of children's learning indicate that, from low starting points, children make good progress. The leader of the early years has introduced a number of well-judged strategies to improve outcomes further. These have been focused on speech and language development and improving fine motor skills. The school is also developing closer relationships with the local pre-school to ensure improved transition. This work is having an impact and consequently children's outcomes continue to improve and are now closer to national levels.
- My third key line of enquiry was reviewing what leaders are doing to improve attainment across the school, especially in mathematics. This was because in

2018, although pupils' progress at the end of key stage 2 was in line with national figures, not enough pupils achieved the expected standard.

- Your school improvement plan clearly identifies mathematics as one of its main priorities. You have introduced a new approach to mathematics. Teaching emphasises deep knowledge, practice to develop mathematical fluency and extra help for pupils who need it. This provides pupils with confidence when using their knowledge to tackle calculations. Although an improving picture is emerging, middle leaders who are new to their roles need to check on the impact of actions in this area with further precision.
- Pupils' mathematical fluency is improving because teachers plan opportunities for pupils to practise their skills. Through your chosen approach, pupils use visual images and resources to represent their thinking in different ways. There is regular assessment to ensure that pupils are keeping up. However, evidence from pupils' books shows that reasoning tasks are less well developed. There is still more to do to develop all teachers' understanding of the use of strategies to deepen pupils' mathematical thinking. That said, assessment data and work in books both show that current pupils' attainment in mathematics is improving in every year group and is now closer to national figures.

Next steps for the school

Leaders and those responsible for governance should ensure that:

- outcomes continue to improve by ensuring that middle leaders check on the impact of actions with further precision
- new approaches to teaching mathematics are embedded and include further opportunities for pupils to use their reasoning skills.

I am copying this letter to the chair of the governing board, 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

Felix Rayner
Ofsted Inspector

Information about the inspection

During the inspection, I held meetings with you and your senior leadership team; subject leaders; the leader of the early years; three governors, including the co-chairs of the governing body; and a representative of the local authority. I met with a group of pupils and spoke with other pupils during the day. I took note of 13 responses from Parent View and six free-text comments that were received. I also spoke to parents first thing in the morning. I considered the views of 26 staff who

responded to the staff survey. I also took account of 37 responses to the pupil questionnaire. I observed teaching and learning alone and jointly with the deputy headteacher. I looked at pupils' work in their classrooms and considered the progress evident in a selection of pupils' workbooks. I scrutinised school documents, including the child protection and safeguarding records, the school's improvement plan and self-evaluation document.