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Dear Mrs Key

Short inspection of Chailey School

Following my visit to the school on 10 January 2017 with Ofsted Inspector Sue Wood, 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 February 2012.

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 made a real difference since arriving in September 2016. You lead with clarity, passion and assurance. Your clarity means that you have already strengthened the accuracy of how leaders evaluate the effectiveness of provision. You have correctly identified where improvements should be made. With the support of the governing body, you and the leadership team are already tackling these areas with gusto.

You have built on the established culture and ethos of the school, which is enhanced by the strong relationships between staff and pupils. Staff know their pupils very well and help them to grow in confidence while developing their knowledge and understanding. As a result, pupils make good, and sometimes better, progress. Pupils appreciate what staff do for them and, therefore, their conduct is typically exemplary, both in lessons and around the school. Pupils are encouraged to have high aspirations.

At the time of the last inspection, inspectors identified that more pupils could make outstanding progress if: other teachers used effective teaching and learning strategies already in use in the school; teachers planned lessons that more closely match the needs and abilities of all groups of pupils; and pupils knew how to

improve their work.

Leaders, with the support and rigorous challenge of the governors, have shared the strengths in English and other departments to highlight strategies that work to improve teaching and learning. Leaders work collaboratively with the local authority and are often asked to share their best practice with other schools. The programme of training for staff has been further enhanced by leaders' effective use of school-based 'action research'. Consequently, teaching is improving and staff apply the school's teaching and learning policy effectively.

Teachers know their pupils' individual needs well. In the strongest lessons, teachers use this information effectively, to challenge pupils and ensure a deeper level of understanding. Teachers also ensure that pupils can identify how to improve their work. However, this is not applied as consistently as you would like it to be.

Safeguarding is effective.

The arrangements for safeguarding are effective, and all necessary checks are undertaken in the recruitment of staff. Leaders and governors are trained in safer recruitment and are involved fully in staff interviews. Staff and governors receive regular updates throughout the year and have read the most up-to-date guidance on 'Keeping children safe in education'. Governors regularly check school processes and systems for safeguarding.

Pupils are taught how to stay safe, and they feel safe at school. Parents agree their children are well cared for and safe at this school.

Inspection findings

- During this inspection we looked closely at safeguarding arrangements. Inspectors considered how leaders are improving pupils' attendance and how effectively the school is meeting the needs of disadvantaged pupils and pupils who have special educational needs and/or disabilities.
- You correctly identified that attendance needed to be improved and made attendance a whole-school focus when you arrived in September. The additional staff employed to work with particular pupils and parents are having a positive impact. Pupils' attendance is improving, particularly the disadvantaged and those who have special educational needs and/or disabilities.
- You have rightly identified that some disadvantaged pupils make more progress in some subjects than others. However, leaders are not looking closely enough at which interventions are having the greatest impact and which are not. Leaders need to give greater consideration to disadvantaged pupils who are working in line with national expectations.
- The leader responsible for pupils who have special educational needs and/or disabilities, known as the special educational needs coordinator (SENCo), has a comprehensive tracking system in place in each year group for those that require support. This system allows her to monitor the impact of this provision precisely.

In stronger subjects, such as English, strategies to support pupils with special educational needs and/or disabilities are used exceptionally well. However, this is not consistent enough across subjects. You and the SENCo have rightly identified the pupils who have special educational needs and/or disabilities who need to make more progress. You are determined to keep improving the transition of this group. As a result the SENCo is working with primary schools to identify action plans earlier for particular pupils, so support can be directed appropriately when arriving at secondary school.

Next steps for the school

Leaders and those responsible for governance should ensure that:

- they look more closely at the interventions that are having a limited impact and adapt them accordingly
- disadvantaged pupils make consistently good progress across subjects and year groups
- all staff consistently plan lessons to support those who have special educational needs and/or disabilities.

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

Caroline Walshe
Ofsted Inspector

Information about the inspection

Inspectors met with you, your leadership team, members of the governing body, middle leaders and the attendance team. We met with pupils, including disadvantaged pupils, and those who have special educational needs and/or disabilities, both formally and informally, to discuss their views about their learning. We carried out learning walks with you and the leadership team to a variety of subjects and year groups. We looked at school documentation, including the school's improvement plans, with current progress information, the school's self-evaluation, and attendance information for current pupils. We also checked school policies relating to safeguarding and behaviour, and we looked at how the additional funding is being spent. Inspectors considered 91 responses to Ofsted's online survey, Parent View, and 12 responses to the staff questionnaire.