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Miss Kelly Dillon
Fairfields Primary School
Council Road
Basingstoke
Hampshire
RG21 3DH

Dear Miss Dillon,

Short inspection of Fairfields Primary School

Following my visit to the school on 12 October 2017, 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 2013.

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 secured substantial and sustained improvements in the school's work since your appointment in September 2016. You have built a strong team of teachers, teaching assistants and governors who are committed to continuing to provide high-quality education for all pupils. You have re-established a confident, hard-working atmosphere in the school and refocused your team on the key priorities for the school's development. Staff morale is high.

When appointed, you quickly identified the need to secure urgent improvements in the quality of teaching. Since then, you have worked positively and constructively with your team to improve teaching across the school. You have made sure that teachers understand their responsibility for ensuring that pupils of all abilities achieve well. You have provided teachers with good-quality training, which they have put to good use to develop their practice. As a result, pupils learn well. Pupils said that they like the changes you have made to teaching and feel that they are making better progress. The work in pupils' books supports this positive view.

At the start of last year, you took the sensible decision to focus on improving English teaching. Since then, a whole-school focus on English has brought rapid improvements to pupils' progress in reading and writing and has lifted standards across the school. Teachers have much higher expectations of pupils' learning than previously and teach with increasing skill. They use questions and explanations very

well during lessons to check pupils' understanding and to address any misunderstanding which may arise.

You are now intent on making similar improvements so that standards are higher in mathematics by the end of key stage 2. Your mathematics leader is clear about what needs to be done and has already made a good start. For example, she has introduced a more consistent, whole-school approach to mathematics teaching, with more opportunities for teachers to develop pupils' reasoning skills. However, it is still early days. Some mathematics teaching lacks the challenge and depth needed to ensure that pupils learn as fully as they could, particularly the most able pupils. You and your mathematics leader have already identified this aspect of mathematics teaching as the next priority for development so that pupils of all abilities achieve as well in mathematics as they do in English.

You have developed rigorous procedures for monitoring the quality of teaching and learning. As a result, you and your team are very clear about how well pupils are learning across the school and about where further improvements are needed. You make sure that governors have all the information they need so they can hold leaders to account for pupils' learning and well-being.

Pupils are friendly, welcoming and well behaved. They greet visitors politely and with interest. Improvements in pupils' behaviour during the past year mean that they achieve more in lessons than previously and make better progress over time. However, while pupils are keen to do their best, some give up too easily and lose concentration during lessons, particularly when tackling more difficult work.

Safeguarding is effective.

Since your appointment, you have increased the focus on safeguarding throughout the school so that pupils' safety is given the highest priority. You have improved communication routes and strengthened procedures so that they are fit for purpose. You have established a more open culture in the school so that pupils are confident to talk to adults about any worries. You have made sure that all staff and governors are well qualified and knowledgeable about safeguarding procedures. Pupils feel respected, valued and secure. All parents who completed Ofsted's online questionnaire feel that their children are safe and happy in school.

You and your team monitor pupils' safety carefully. You keep detailed and high-quality records, which enable you to build a valuable picture of pupils' well-being over time. You follow up any safeguarding concerns thoroughly. You and your team keep in regular contact with agencies and parents wherever needed so that you have an up-to-date understanding of family circumstances.

Inspection findings

■ During this inspection, I focused particularly on:

- how successfully teaching ensures that the most able pupils achieve well, particularly in mathematics

- how well leaders use additional funding to ensure that disadvantaged pupils achieve as well as they could, especially in mathematics
 - how effectively leaders check that extra help for pupils who have additional needs is making a difference to their learning
 - how well leaders ensure that pupils are well behaved and safe.
- Improvements in the quality of teaching during the past year mean that teachers have much higher expectations of pupils' learning, including that of disadvantaged pupils and the most able. They set work for pupils which engages, challenges and extends learning increasingly well, particularly in English. However, teaching does not yet deepen pupils' mathematical understanding as fully as it should, especially that of the most able pupils.
 - Disadvantaged pupils' progress has improved substantially during the past year. The inclusion leader makes sure that additional funds are used to support individual pupils' needs more precisely than before, and that teachers have a clearer understanding of pupils' needs. As a result, most disadvantaged pupils make strong progress from their starting points. However, as with other pupils, the most able disadvantaged do not always achieve as well as they could in mathematics.
 - Leaders have established more rigorous checks on pupils' progress during the past 12 months. As a result, leaders and teachers are clear about how well pupils are learning and are quick to recognise when pupils need extra help. Teachers work closely with specialists, such as educational psychologists, to support pupils who have additional needs. The work in pupils' books illustrates the positive impact that good-quality support has had on pupils' learning, particularly that of those pupils who have special educational needs and/or disabilities.
 - Leaders take any concerns about pupils' safety very seriously. They act swiftly whenever they have concerns about pupils' well-being and seek specialist advice from agencies, such as children's services and the police, wherever appropriate. The headteacher and her leadership team have made changes to safeguarding policies during the past year to ensure a robust approach to keeping pupils safe.
 - Leaders have secured substantial improvements in pupils' behaviour during the past year. They have worked constructively with teachers, pupils and parents to review and update the behaviour policy so that everyone is clear about expectations and procedures. Teachers follow the school's behaviour policy consistently. Most parents feel that behaviour is good in the school.
 - Pupils behave well in the classrooms, during playtimes and when moving around the school. However, sometimes a small number lose concentration during lessons and so make less progress than their classmates. Pupils said that behaviour has improved a great deal since the headteacher's appointment. One said, 'Our new headteacher is stricter, so behaviour is better and we feel safer.' Improved attendance rates reflect pupils' growing enjoyment of school.

Next steps for the school

Leaders and those responsible for governance should ensure that:

- pupils make better progress in mathematics, particularly the most able, so that standards are higher at the end of key stage 2
- teachers help pupils to develop the confidence and skills needed to persevere when tackling more challenging work.

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

Julie Sackett
Ofsted Inspector

Information about the inspection

During the inspection, I met with you, your deputy headteacher, the English and mathematics leaders and the inclusion leader. I also met with the chair of the governing body and one other governor and had a telephone discussion with a local authority representative. I took account of 41 responses to Ofsted's online questionnaire, Parent View, and spoke with parents informally during the school day. I also considered 62 responses to Ofsted's online staff questionnaire. I reviewed the school's website and considered a range of documents, including your summary of the school's effectiveness and the school's improvement plan. I also looked at documents about safeguarding, behaviour and attendance.

I visited eight lessons with you and your deputy headteacher to observe teaching and learning. I looked at pupils' work in their books during lessons and discussed pupils' learning with your English and mathematics leaders. I talked with pupils during my visits to the classrooms and during playtime.