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Mrs Jo Matthews  
Headteacher  
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Berkshire  
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Dear Mrs Matthews

### **Short inspection of Littledown School**

Following my visit to the school on 6 July 2016 with Mary Geddes, Ofsted Inspector, 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 your predecessor school was judged to be good in May 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 continue to lead this very effective school with determination and vision. Very well supported by the deputy headteacher, you have instilled a culture of high expectation, where pupils' outcomes are central to the school's core moral purpose.

There are well-planned systems to check teaching and learning. You and the deputy headteacher use them effectively to ensure you know the school's strengths and weaknesses well. Your development of new middle leadership roles, such as the leaders for assessment and the curriculum, has been successful. They now take a fuller role in checking provision with senior leaders so that plans for improvement are well targeted and effective.

You ensure that you use what you know about teachers to set robust performance management targets, which are grounded in raising the achievements of pupils. This ensures that staff skills are developed effectively. As a result, practice across the school is now consistently strong.

Lessons are exciting, fun and purposeful. Teachers encourage pupils to show independence and to take responsibility for their own behaviour. Relationships are

very positive. This helps to ensure that pupils rightly feel well supported when faced with completing challenging work. Teachers are skilled and know their pupils exceptionally well. Consequently, they capture their interests and enthusiasm effectively. The strategies you have introduced have had an exceptionally positive impact on pupils' writing and ability to read. You have rightly recognised that progress has not been as strong in mathematics. The actions you and other leaders have taken have started to address this, but pupils' progress in mathematics remains less rapid and sustained than that seen in reading and writing.

Pupils make exceptional progress in their behaviour and attitudes to learning. This is because the curriculum is adapted very well to meet their individual needs and because staff are particularly skilled at managing challenging behaviour. Consequently, all groups of pupils, including those who are disadvantaged and those who have special educational needs and/or disabilities, narrow the gaps in their outcomes with their peers nationally.

Work in books demonstrates that pupils increasingly enjoy their learning and take pride in their work. However, you and the local governing body have rightly recognised that the frequency of fixed-term exclusions remains too high. Although you have taken effective action to address this, they continue to be much higher than is typical.

### **Safeguarding is effective.**

You have established a transparent and open culture. This means that whenever any member of staff has a concern, it is shared and acted upon. Pupils rightly report that they feel safe. Staff and governors take their responsibilities to look after children very seriously. They receive appropriate and timely training about what they need to know and do to follow the child protection policies of the school.

Pupils know how to keep themselves safe, including when using the internet. They learn about topical issues in the news and this is used to discuss relevant areas for them as they develop. Difficult discussions are not avoided and this helps pupils develop a strong sense of their own identity and how to develop healthy relationships with the people around them.

The school site is secure and appropriate systems are in place to ensure that visitors only have access when granted. Appropriate risk assessments and behaviour plans are in place for all pupils. Leaders ensure that there are very effective working relationships with other agencies. They rightly follow up any referrals they make with tenacity and attention.

### **Inspection findings**

- Together, you and other leaders, including governors, have successfully embedded a culture of high expectations for what pupils can and should achieve academically and personally. Pupils' welfare and wellbeing are at the core of what you do. Consequently, there is a togetherness among the staff team, who work very effectively under your leadership to improve

outcomes for pupils.

- Middle leaders, such as the leads for the curriculum and assessment, work well with senior leaders to support improvements to teaching. Leaders work very effectively and collaboratively to continually improve the quality of provision. For example, the curriculum is exciting and designed around the individual needs of the pupils. You have recognised that it would now be useful to develop this further by giving more people responsibilities. For example, you are now asking other teachers to take an overview of specific subjects.
- Pupils' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development is promoted exceptionally well. British values are addressed in ways appropriate to pupils' experiences and understanding. For example, the use of 'espresso news', an online resource to support teaching, to open topical debates is used exceptionally well to help pupils prepare themselves for life in modern Britain.
- You, along with the lead for assessment, have developed good methods to track pupils' progress using the new national curriculum. You use this information to regularly review how well pupils are doing and check this against their work in books. However, the new system you have introduced does not always help to set the highest expectations that you expect to see. You have rightly identified the need to tackle this as you establish the new system in the future.
- Your intensive outreach service is innovative and highly effective. You work very effectively to support other schools to include pupils who have social, emotional or mental health difficulties. Since the last inspection, you have extended what the school does to support pupils who are at risk of exclusion, as well as helping to train staff at their schools. An equally effective pupil referral unit is delivered under your leadership. Consequently, your expertise is utilised very well across the local area. This has had a very positive impact on the proportion of exclusions locally, which are continuing to decline.
- The local governing body provides effective and robust challenge for leaders. They receive useful information from the headteacher about key areas of the school's work and use this to ask pertinent and relevant questions. Governors play a strategic role in supporting and working with other provision in the local area. This helps them to work proficiently with leaders to add value to the effectiveness of the school.
- The overall quality of teaching is of a very high standard. Teachers effectively establish a calm and purposeful atmosphere in their lessons, because they strive to engage and enthuse pupils in their learning. At the same time, they have the highest expectations. Pupils appreciate the clear boundaries they are given and work hard to please the adults they work with, because they believe they are valued as part of the close community. Parents rightly speak very highly about their experiences and the difference they see in their children's attitudes about learning.
- Other adults, such as teaching assistants, specialist teachers and therapists, make a vital contribution to the progress that pupils make at the school. All staff know pupils exceptionally well and so encourage them to use every

opportunity to make progress. Pupils appreciate what the adults in the school do for them. Consequently, pupils' emotional and social needs are particularly well met.

- Behaviour management is very effective. This has been clearly evidenced in lessons, in incidents for individual children and in the attitudes that pupils show towards their work and the school as a whole. Pupils often join the school having had prolonged periods of negative schooling, and so they present with exceptionally challenging behaviour. However, they quickly settle at the school and make exceptionally quick progress in presenting with much more positive attitudes to their learning.
- The speed with which pupils settle at the school helps them to be much more ready to learn. Strengths in the curriculum and teaching help them to make the most of this and they very quickly make much stronger progress. By the time they leave the school, many attain the levels expected for their age. Several also manage the transition back into mainstream schooling successfully.
- All groups of pupils make similar progress. Their progress in reading and writing is rapid and sustained, because of the effective strategies that have been introduced by leaders and the strength of teaching. Progress in mathematics has improved recently, but has yet to be sustained at the same level as that seen in other subjects.

### **Next steps for the school**

Leaders and those responsible for governance should ensure that:

- pupils' progress in mathematics is consistently rapid and sustained
- the number of fixed-term exclusions continues to reduce.

I am copying this letter to the chair of the local governing body, the regional schools commissioner and the director of children's services for Slough. This letter will be published on the Ofsted website.

Yours sincerely

Matthew Barnes

**Her Majesty's Inspector**

### **Information about the inspection**

Inspectors met with you, the deputy headteacher, middle leaders, four governors and a group of pupils. I had a telephone conversation with a representative from Slough Children's Services Trust, who provide special educational needs and disability services for Slough local authority. Inspectors visited a number of lessons, all of which were accompanied by a member of the senior leadership team, to observe teaching and look at work in pupils' books. Inspectors observed pupils'

behaviour in a range of situations, including lessons, lunchtime and in the playground. We considered the responses of 10 parents to Ofsted's online questionnaire, Parent View, as well as their responses to a recent school survey. Inspectors analysed a range of documentation, including leaders' evaluations of their data and the improvement plan, minutes of the local governing body, information about pupils' progress and safeguarding documentation. They also looked through some of the pupils' work in their learning books.