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Mr Tim Deery
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Dear Mr Deery

Short inspection of Portway Junior School

Following my visit to the school on 12 February 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 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. Together with your deputy headteacher, you have high expectations for both your pupils and staff. You have built an effective staff team whose members are reflective and learn from each other. The University of Winchester uses the expertise of your teaching team to support the development of trainee teachers.

Pupils love many aspects of life at Portway Juniors, including the playground adventure trail and after-school clubs, such as the popular 'Glee' club. They especially enjoy trying to beat their 'personal best' in the daily mile run. Lessons, they say, are 'always fun'. Pupils told me how friendly the school is. They have a great sense of pride in each other's achievements. As one Year 3 pupil said, 'I like clapping for other people when they get an award.' Pupils work together and support each other well. For example, in a Year 6 mathematics lesson pupils were discussing how to solve division problems, to ensure that they all understood the methods used.

Most parents are positive about the school. As one parent commented, 'My children have flourished by being at this school and always want to come to school to learn.' Parents value how caring and approachable the staff are. They appreciate the many opportunities they have to be involved in their children's learning. For example, during the week of my visit, parents had been invited to attend a pop-up Egyptian museum, showcasing what the Year 3 pupils had learned and made. One parent

said, 'Portway Junior School ticks every box when it comes to parental engagement and making everyone feel welcome.'

Leaders have maintained the strengths highlighted at the last inspection. Attainment in mathematics at the end of key stage 2 continues to be higher than the national average, in both the expected and higher standards. At the time of the last inspection, inspectors also identified the high levels of challenge pupils received in lessons. This continues to be a strength of teaching at the school. In my visits to lessons, I observed teachers routinely challenging pupils to think deeply and apply their knowledge to different contexts.

The previous inspection report asked leaders to improve the teaching of writing so that more pupils reached the higher standards than in the past. You have been successful here. In writing, the proportion of Year 6 pupils who exceeded the expected standard for their age in 2018 was in line with the national picture. However, leaders have rightly identified that the progress some pupils make in writing should be stronger.

Safeguarding is effective.

The leadership team has ensured that all safeguarding arrangements are fit for purpose. Records are detailed and the designated safeguarding leaders act swiftly to address concerns. Strong communication between the safeguarding team, other staff and external agencies ensures that nothing is missed. There is a culture of high vigilance and care at Portway Junior School. All appropriate checks are undertaken on the suitability of staff and volunteers to work with pupils. Safeguarding training is frequent and well planned. Leaders regularly check that training is understood and, as a result, staff are very clear that safeguarding is everyone's responsibility.

Leaders have planned a curriculum that incorporates many opportunities for pupils to learn how to keep themselves safe. For example, pupils have a good understanding of healthy lifestyles. They love using the outdoor gym and participating in sporting events and clubs. The emotional and mental well-being of pupils are equally important to leaders. Pupils told me they could talk openly and honestly to staff and they will always be listened to. Pupils say they feel safe in school. They say there is no bullying at Portway Junior School but if there was, 'teachers would sort it out'.

Inspection findings

- At the beginning of the inspection, we agreed that the focus would be on: the teaching of writing; the use of additional funding for disadvantaged pupils and pupils with special educational needs and/or disabilities (SEND); and how effectively leaders and governors ensure that the school continues to improve.
- The teaching of writing is mostly effective. Assessment is accurate. Teachers pay close attention to the teaching of basic skills and, as a result, pupils' spelling, punctuation and handwriting is of a good standard. Teachers' expectations of the

standard of writing in subjects other than English are high. Leaders are committed to ensuring that pupils read challenging texts to enhance their vocabulary development. As a result, pupils are ambitious with their word choice in their own writing.

- Leaders have recently introduced a range of different teaching strategies to improve the teaching of writing further. Where these strategies are being consistently applied, they are having a positive impact on the progress pupils are making. However, there is some variability in the application of these strategies. Sometimes pupils are not clear on what is expected of them and, as a result, some pupils do not make as much progress as they should.
- Since the last inspection, leaders have reviewed the effectiveness of the provision for pupils with SEND. The recently appointed special educational needs coordinator (SENCo) has quickly gained an overview of the quality of provision and outcomes for pupils with SEND. Together with her inclusion team, she is passionate about improving the teaching and learning for pupils with SEND.
- Communication with parents of children with SEND is now regular and focused on the progress the pupils are making. Interventions are tracked carefully for their effectiveness. However, there is some variability in the quality of teaching for pupils with SEND. Learning and activities are not always matched to pupils' specific needs.
- Pastoral leadership is a significant strength of the school. Pupils with challenging behaviour are supported very effectively in the school. Behaviour management is strong. Staff members' knowledge of individual pupils, their triggers and needs, is precise. The school's nurture room, 'Tortuga', provides a safe space for pupils to understand their emotions and build relationships. As a result, exclusions have dropped. There have been no exclusions this academic year. Pupils have a mature understanding of equalities issues and support each other well.
- The use of additional funding for disadvantaged pupils in the school is effective. Leaders have established a clear strategy and, as a result, disadvantaged pupils make good progress academically, emotionally and socially. The attendance of this group of pupils has risen sharply.
- Leaders are accurate in their self-evaluation of the effectiveness of the school. Their strategic planning is clear and precise, focused on the right things. Leaders have ensured that the curriculum is broad, balanced and exciting. Subject content is sequenced well, to support pupils in acquiring knowledge and applying skills in a systematic way.
- Middle leadership is a strength of the school. Middle leaders are regularly given time to evaluate the impact of teaching in their year groups, As a result, they have an accurate view of the quality of teaching and provide strong support and challenge to their colleagues. A culture of 'no excuses' permeates staff discussions at Portway Juniors. Governors are committed to the school and are deeply ambitious that every pupil will make the best possible progress. They challenge and support leaders effectively.

Next steps for the school

Leaders and those responsible for governance should ensure that:

- all staff consistently follow the school's chosen teaching approaches to writing to ensure that pupils make equally strong progress in all classes
- teaching supports pupils with SEND effectively, so that these pupils make stronger progress than they presently do.

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

Lea Hannam
Ofsted Inspector

Information about the inspection

During the inspection, I met with you and your deputy headteacher to discuss the school's effectiveness. Together, we visited classrooms to observe pupils' learning, talk to pupils and look at their work. In addition, with the English leader, we looked in depth at the quality of work in a range of pupils' books. I considered 61 responses from parents to the online questionnaire, Parent View, including free-text comments. I also spoke to parents at the beginning of the school day. Responses to Ofsted's staff and pupil questionnaires were considered and I had a meeting with a group of pupils to discuss their views about the school.

I met with five governors, including the chair of the governing body, and held a telephone conversation with a representative from the local authority. I evaluated the school's safeguarding arrangements. I also met with middle leaders, the SENCo and the inclusion support worker. A wide range of documents was examined, including: the school's self-evaluation; school-improvement planning; information about pupils' progress; and various policies. I also examined the school's website.