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Mr Adrian Mount
Headteacher
Foreland Fields School
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Dear Mr Mount

Short inspection of Foreland Fields School

Following my visit to the school on 29 November 2017 with Anne Allen and Susan Conway, Ofsted Inspectors, 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 June 2013.

This school continues to be good.

The leadership team has maintained the good quality of education in the school since the last inspection. Since taking up your appointment in September 2015, you have worked tirelessly to ensure that all staff are committed to your vision and determination to move the school forward. You have brought a fresh approach to leadership and a notable, positive change. You work cohesively with the senior leadership team and governing body. Together, you have re-evaluated the school's strengths and identified key areas for development that will support the school's further improvement.

Our visits to classrooms showed the school to be a happy place, where pupils enjoy learning and make strong progress. Relationships between staff and pupils are strong and this enables pupils to develop their confidence. All staff know pupils very well and have a good understanding of their academic, social and medical needs.

Pupils are rightly proud of their active involvement in the running of the school. For example, they have worked hard to develop the school's new logo and class names. Their achievement of the UNICEF Rights Respecting Schools Award recognises the strengths of pupil voice across the school.

You have successfully addressed the areas for improvement identified at the last inspection. Pupils' independence skills are now routinely well developed and facilitated effectively by all staff. Staff use a wide range of approaches and

strategies that meet pupils' different needs and starting points. Consequently, the pace of pupils' learning has improved. You are working effectively to ensure that teachers continue to use the information and knowledge that they have about pupils' progress to plan activities that both support and challenge pupils. Classroom visits confirmed that teachers plan learning to meet the needs of pupils of all abilities, and that the levels of expectation are appropriate most of the time.

During our discussions, you were able to explain clearly the school's many strengths, as well as the areas that need to be developed. Your work in partnership with other Kent special schools to enhance systems to assess pupils' academic progress is going well. You recognise that assessment needs further development to ensure that all staff have a deep understanding of every aspect of pupils' progress, both academically and personally. We agreed that developing middle leaders' understanding of their strategic role in improving all aspects of the school should be a key priority going forward.

Safeguarding is effective.

Arrangements to safeguard pupils are effective. Comprehensive and robust policies and procedures are embedded in the school's safeguarding culture and ethos. Staff have an accurate understanding of their responsibilities and are alert to any sign that a pupil might be at risk. Staff know and follow the correct procedures for passing concerns to the leaders responsible for safeguarding.

Leaders work well together and with outside agencies to support vulnerable pupils and their families. Checks on the suitability of all staff, including regular visitors, are very thorough. Leaders check attendance and reasons for pupils' absence thoroughly to make sure that they identify any patterns of attendance that might indicate that a pupil may be at risk.

External audits of safeguarding help governors check that arrangements are effective. Leaders act swiftly on any recommendations for improvement, for example in tightening their organisation of child protection records. The governor responsible for safeguarding takes his responsibilities to keep children safe seriously and ensures that all governors are kept up to date with any changes to safeguarding guidance and legislation.

Inspection findings

- At the start of the inspection, we agreed to look at the effectiveness of safeguarding; how successfully the school achieves its aim of making sure that pupils become as independent as possible; how leaders are ensuring that successful systems of communication are in place between parents and the school; and how leaders are ensuring that pupils make as much progress as possible, both academically and personally.
- Pupils develop their independence skills well throughout the school day. Pupils are encouraged to collect their own equipment and take responsibility for their own learning, where possible. Teaching assistants facilitate pupils' independence

through precise questioning and skilful prompting. However, occasionally teachers' planning does not sufficiently meet the needs of all pupils. Consequently, this can result in pupils being over-reliant on adult support to complete some tasks.

- Most pupils are making good or better progress in a range of subjects. School leaders track the progress of pupils well in English, mathematics and science and this enables them to quickly identify when pupils are at risk of falling behind. New systems of assessing and monitoring pupils' progress are rigorous. However, these need to begin to incorporate aspects of pupils' progress beyond the academic subjects. This will allow leaders to evaluate the impact that the school is having on all aspects of a pupils' development.
- Scrutiny of pupils' work and observations in classrooms demonstrate that most pupils are making strong progress over time. In situations where progress is slower due to the individual needs of the pupils, inspectors saw small steps of progress. Leaders have correctly identified that progress in writing needs to improve across the school. They have developed a new approach to the teaching of writing and, although in its infancy, this is beginning to have a positive impact.
- The majority of parents are extremely positive about the school. For example, one parent stated: 'I am no longer on my own, I have help,' when commenting on the support that they have received from the school. Most parents spoken to, along with those who expressed their views on the Ofsted survey, Parent View, feel that communication links between home and school are effective. Parents and staff use the home-school communication book regularly as a line of communication and the school's open-door policy ensures that parents are able to contact staff when they have any concerns.
- A small number of parents expressed concerns regarding the management of pupils' medical needs during the course of the inspection. Although all health care plans seen by inspectors indicated that systems for administering medication are robust, leaders are aware that communication between the school and parents of pupils with a high level of medical needs must improve.

Next steps for the school

Leaders and those responsible for governance should ensure that:

- middle leaders continue to develop so that they are able to contribute fully towards meeting the school's strategic vision
- they remain focused on improving pupils' progress in writing to match that made in mathematics and reading
- the information about what pupils can already do and understand is used consistently to plan activities that match all pupils' individual needs
- they continue to work on improving lines of communication between parents and the school.

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

Yours sincerely

Emma Sanderson
Her Majesty's Inspector

Information about the inspection

I met with you and your senior leadership team at the start of the day. We discussed your evaluation of the school's effectiveness and agreed the key areas we would focus on during the inspection. During the day, I held further discussions with you. I met with the chair and four other members of the governing body. Inspectors observed teaching in 16 lessons, most jointly with senior leaders. We also scrutinised pupils' work and progress files with middle leaders. We took account of 14 pupil survey responses, 34 staff survey responses and nine responses by parents to Ofsted's online questionnaire, Parent View, including seven free-text responses. Inspectors spoke with parents before and during school, with staff and pupils at breaktime. Inspectors analysed a range of the school's documentation, including leaders' checks on pupils' progress, the quality of teaching and learning, performance management information and safeguarding policies and procedures. A meeting was held with the local authority school improvement consultant linked to the school.