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Mrs Jinna Male  
Headteacher  
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Dear Mrs Male

### **Short inspection of Alfriston School**

Following my visit to the school on 11 January 2018 with Ofsted Inspector Jo Yates, 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 outstanding in July 2013.

### **This school continues to be outstanding.**

The leadership team has maintained the outstanding quality of education in the school since the last inspection.

You lead with great determination and are relentless in your drive to provide the best for the pupils in your care. You are not complacent and are always working to further refine and improve the school. Your clear and ambitious vision for the school and its pupils is shared by the whole staff team.

The school is a happy and caring place. You put the needs of pupils in the centre of all decisions. You have successfully restructured your leadership team and developed leadership at all levels. The leadership team has established a rich curriculum that is highly focused on meeting pupils' needs and furthering their aspirations. Well-planned and skilful teaching means that pupils make excellent progress with their academic, social and personal learning. Behaviour is exceptionally good because pupils are supported to understand appropriate behaviour. They make rapid progress, when required, when learning how to moderate their own behaviour.

You and your leadership team have an accurate view of the school's effectiveness. You have built on the school's many strengths, as identified in the previous inspection report, and have successfully addressed the areas for improvement. For example, you have created a welcoming school library with a wide range of books appropriate for all readers. The pupils are proud of their library and their role in

designing it. You rightly identify aspects of the school's work that can be further refined, such as how leaders track and report on pupils' progress. You are also working to sharpen the way that you report the use of additional funding so that governors are able to hold leaders more closely to account.

Pupils are very happy at Alfriston. They make excellent progress because staff know them very well and have very high aspirations for them. Pupils say that they have no concerns about bullying, behaviour or safety. They told inspectors that, if there is unkind behaviour, staff resolve matters very quickly and effectively. Pupils enjoy the varied lessons, especially those relating to employment, which develop their employability skills very well. They also appreciate the wide range of residential activities and can identify how these help them to be well prepared for living independently in the future.

Parents and carers are overwhelmingly positive about the school and the difference it has made to their children's well-being and progress. Typical comments include 'The support she received from the teaching staff is second to none', 'there is a wonderful nurturing atmosphere that gives my daughter challenges and opportunities to develop her confidence, independence and academic ability' and 'simply faultless'.

### **Safeguarding is effective.**

The leadership team has ensured that all safeguarding arrangements are fit for purpose, training is up to date and records are detailed and of high quality. Checks on the suitability of staff are suitably rigorous. Staff are well briefed and have a clear understanding of their responsibilities. Staff are alert for any signs that a pupil may be at risk, and the school's records show that staff are vigilant and report any concerns promptly. Leaders communicate well with families and external agencies to help ensure that pupils are kept safe.

The wide variety of non-classroom-based activities undertaken on- and off-site, such as the forest school, visits to the local garden centre and learning how to use public transport, are all supported by suitable risk assessments. Leaders routinely review their processes to ensure that they are as robust as possible, making changes as required.

### **Inspection findings**

- During the inspection, I explored the steps that leaders have taken to ensure that pupils make at least good progress from their starting points. I found that pupils make excellent progress due to the carefully designed curriculum, along with the purposeful and well-planned lessons. Staff know their pupils exceptionally well and have high ambitions for each one. They provide appropriate challenge, and pupils make rapid progress academically, socially and emotionally. Pupils and parents were extremely positive when describing the difference Alfriston and its staff have made to them. Leaders routinely review and adapt the curriculum to make sure that it engages and inspires pupils. This work has been highly

successful. Leaders are currently working to refine their tracking and monitoring of pupils' progress. They understand the need to ensure that what is recorded captures the wide range of progress that pupils make, and that it can be easily understood by pupils, parents, governors and staff.

- I also examined how well pupils are supported to move on to their next steps and succeed in modern British society. This aspect of the school's work is exceptional. Social and emotional learning are integrated seamlessly into the curriculum alongside academic study. Pupils rapidly grow in self-esteem and confidence. They develop a secure understanding of the world and how to interact with respect and self-assurance. The extensive work experience programme is carefully staged so that pupils develop their communication and employability skills while strengthening their social and emotional skills. Staff have worked hard to establish a wide range of external links to support this aspect of the curriculum. They select specialist external courses carefully, routinely evaluating them to make sure that they provide what their pupils need. Pupils speak very highly of these opportunities, enjoying courses such as motor vehicle maintenance, animal care and catering. Leaders have ensured that qualifications are taken, when appropriate, so that pupils can have external verification of their attainment. Transition arrangements for pupils moving on after Alfriston are extensive and effective. The school's information shows that retention rates are excellent. Pupils succeed with their next steps because they and their families are supported well to make informed and appropriate choices.
- I considered how effectively the governing body fulfils its statutory obligations, especially those relating to leaders' use of additional funding. Governors are highly supportive of the school and share the ambitions of staff and leaders. They give their time freely and make sure that they are up to date with training, for example safeguarding. They provide a good level of challenge with regard to aspects of work such as performance management, procurement and staff restructuring. They raise important questions with leaders, for example how staff can further support parents as their children move on from Alfriston. However, they are aware of the need to hold leaders more closely to account for the use of additional funding, including the pupil premium, and are taking steps to address this.

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

Leaders and those responsible for governance should ensure that:

- they further refine the system of assessment so that it provides clear and useful information for staff, pupils, parents and governors
- governors hold leaders more closely to account for the use of additional funding.

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

Yours sincerely

Lucy English  
**Her Majesty's Inspector**

### **Information about the inspection**

During this inspection, my colleague and I met with you, other members of school staff and members of the governing body, including the chair of governors. I held a telephone call with your external school adviser, and my colleague telephoned an external provider with whom you work closely. You, your deputy, my colleague and I jointly agreed the key lines of enquiry for the inspection. My colleague and I carried out a series of learning walks where we visited lessons with senior leaders. During these visits, we observed pupils' learning, spoke with pupils and looked at their work. We also met formally with the school council and informally spoke with pupils at lunch and during the day. We considered 33 responses to Ofsted's online questionnaire, Parent View, including 21 written contributions from parents. We spoke with staff and took account of 18 responses to Ofsted's online staff questionnaire. We looked at a range of documentation, including information about the work of governors, safeguarding, attendance and behaviour. We also scrutinised and discussed the school's tracking of pupils' progress and attainment, and the school's self-evaluation and plans for improvement.