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Mrs A Higgins
Headteacher
Barham CE Primary School
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Dear Mrs Higgins

Short inspection of Barham Church of England Primary School

Following my visit to the school on 9 February 2016, 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 2011.

This school continues to be good.

When you took over as headteacher in September 2015, you inherited a successful, popular school. Staff were understandably confident in this. Nevertheless, you have been able to view the school realistically and dispassionately. As a result of accurate evaluation and analysis, you and the governors are rightly keen to refine the school's work further and make key improvements.

You are properly supporting and guiding the staff in raising their expectations of the pupils and themselves. You help them to make their teaching better still. You do this in a measured and very positive way. You take the time to work alongside people and explain what you expect of them clearly. This constructive style means that staff understand what you are asking of them and agree with it. They are very happy to work in the school and are highly motivated to improve. This is a most impressive achievement. It is very important that, as the school continues to develop, you sustain this objectivity and willingness to challenge staff positively to hone their practice.

One important change you have made is to sharpen up the process for managing the performance of staff. Members of staff have clear targets which they see as useful and fair. They receive precise feedback to help them reach the targets. You have built on the work of your predecessor well. The school has successfully met the recommendations from the previous inspection. For example, the quality of teaching is accurately monitored and pupils have good opportunities to learn about

the lives of people different from their own. For example, much effort is given to teaching pupils about all major world religions and the significance of religion.

Safeguarding is effective.

You ensure that procedures for safeguarding the pupils are carried out correctly. Governors keep a watchful eye on this. Proper checks on staff, and other adults, are made when they are recruited, and as needed. The required records are detailed and up to date. Risks are thoroughly assessed. All staff receive regular training in child protection procedures and know what to do in different possible situations. Safeguarding is helpfully discussed frequently in staff meetings.

The school site is kept appropriately secure. Pupils feel very safe and well looked after. Pupils have to walk from the front to the back of the building, up a relatively steep path and over a reasonable distance. All pupils, including the youngest, navigate this in a way which exudes an awareness of safe behaviour and practice.

Inspection findings

- You lead the school very well. You are developing a good and productive partnership with the deputy headteacher. Correctly, you are exploring ways of developing her role further so that she has more opportunities and time to share the leadership of the school with you.
- At all key stages, including the early years, pupils attain well in national assessments. Your careful tracking of current pupils' progress indicates that they make good progress in English and mathematics in all year groups.
- This is supported by other inspection evidence. Across the classes, pupils' writing and work in mathematics seen was of a generally good standard. Pupils have worked successfully in a wide range of areas.
- The pupils who read to me did so with assurance and accuracy. They applied their knowledge of the sounds letters make (phonics) correctly. They understood and could discuss what they read aptly. The school has worked hard to develop its phonics teaching after a slightly disappointing outcome in the Year 1 phonics screening test in 2015. You are confident of improved results this year.
- The teaching I saw across the school was purposeful and clear. Work was set to meet the different needs of pupils. You are, nevertheless, aware of aspects of teaching which would benefit from further development and are able to explain these clearly. For instance, on occasions, teachers' expectations of pupils could be higher. Although teachers' marking of pupils' work is now thorough, it could be done more consistently across the school. In some cases, pupils should be expected to present their work more neatly.
- Staff now make accurate, suitably moderated ongoing assessments of pupils. You analyse these well. You know how well all pupils are doing in English and mathematics.
- Pupils enjoy their learning greatly but they and the staff are not always clear about what they each particularly need to learn as their most important next step. Some parents have noted this too and would like more specific information.

- The small number of pupils entitled to the support of pupil premium funding achieve well. You account for the expenditure carefully and are aware of the need to keep a continuing pastoral eye on this group, to ensure their positive experiences continue.
- The new special educational needs coordinator has made insightful changes. She manages the specialised provision for the pupils for whom she is responsible well. Sensibly, more of this provision now takes place within normal class lessons, which means that class teachers know much more about it. Outcomes for these pupils are generally good and showing some improvement. Parents are pleased.
- The school's self-evaluation is accurate, honest and suitably detailed. The school improvement plan is a well-considered and effective working document. It is adapted as needed; for example, it was changed recently in response to a review of religious education teaching. However, its success criteria are not all sharply defined. This makes it harder to be sure how effectively all improvement actions make an impact on outcomes for pupils.
- The school's physical environment is attractive and motivating. Classroom displays are very stimulating. The playground and outdoor areas are enticing, with scope for future development. In the Reception class, the well-positioned outdoor area is underdeveloped and it is not clear that it is used often or purposefully enough.
- Pupils enjoy a very broad and engaging curriculum. They get real opportunities to think like historians, geographers, scientists, artists and musicians, to name just some. Pupils' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development and their understanding of fundamental British values, such as tolerance, are encouraged well. The school's clearly stated Christian values support pupils' thinking and personal development most positively.
- Subject leaders work very effectively. Nevertheless, you and they realise the school should develop further its assessment arrangements in the foundation subjects, beyond English and mathematics. You need to know in greater detail how well pupils are doing in these subjects.
- Pupils are keen to learn; they listen well and work hard individually and in pairs or groups. They are polite and friendly, playing together cheerfully and safely. They are happy to take on responsibilities within the school. Attendance is above average.
- The governing body knows the school well and is appropriately challenging of you. Its members, usually in pairs, make purposeful visits to see the school at work. Governors were very clear when setting out to appoint the new headteacher last year that they wanted someone who could renew the school while respecting its traditions. In appointing you, governors achieved this. They know how important it is for them to support and challenge you as you continue to revitalise the school and seek to move it towards being outstanding.
- Parents are very happy with the school. A few parents have been concerned by some incidents in the past, such as particular staff changes, but see improvement now. One summed up the prevailing view in saying, 'Barham is an extremely happy, vibrant place to learn!' Another added, 'my children benefit

from a positive environment in which they are nurtured, feel secure, excited by what they are learning and encouraged and appropriately challenged to learn more at home. The children are encouraged to be resilient and curious learners.'

- The local authority supports the school well. It provides valuable advice and a rigorous, external view which you value.

Next steps for the school

Leaders and those responsible for governance should ensure that:

- the improvements currently under way continue; priorities should include identifying more clearly the next steps in learning for pupils, setting precise success criteria in improvement planning, assessing pupils' attainment in foundation subjects and further sharpening and developing teaching
- the use of the Reception class outdoor area is improved, so the children gain the maximum benefit from it.

I am copying this letter to the Chair of the Governing Body, the Regional Schools Commissioner, the Director of Education for the Diocese of Canterbury and the Director of Children's Services for Kent County Council. This letter will be published on the Ofsted website.

Yours sincerely

Robin Hammerton
Her Majesty's Inspector

Information about the inspection

I visited lessons in all seven classes in the school, jointly with the headteacher and deputy headteacher. I spoke with pupils and looked at some of their work. I observed playtime and lunchtime. I met with the headteacher, deputy headteacher, members of staff and governors. I spoke by telephone with a representative of the local authority. I considered the responses from members of staff and pupils to their confidential online questionnaires. I took careful account of 83 responses from parents to Ofsted's online questionnaire, Parent View, and the written comments made by parents. I looked at documents, including the school's self-evaluation and improvement plan, information about pupils' learning and progress, minutes of meetings and records regarding safeguarding and attendance.