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Mrs Barbara North
Headteacher
Ravensden Church of England VA Lower School
Vicarage Close
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Dear Mrs North

Short inspection of Ravensden Church of England Lower 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 December 2010.

This school continues to be good.

The leadership team has maintained the good quality of education at the school since the previous inspection. You have worked effectively, with teachers and teaching assistants, to improve teaching and learning and the quality of the curriculum. As a result, pupils enjoy school, they attend regularly and they achieve well. Standards at the end of Key Stage 1 are well above the national average in reading, writing and mathematics. Effective teaching in Key Stage 2 means that pupils continue to make good progress in these key areas of learning and are well prepared for the next stage of their education when they leave the school at the end of Year 4.

At the previous inspection, inspectors identified some weaknesses in the early years. These included the use of assessment, and inconsistencies in the quality of teaching and learning. Inspectors also found that pupils across the school did not know enough about different faiths, values and cultures. They also said that teaching staff were not making a sufficient contribution to the strategic development of the school. You have been successful in addressing each of these issues.

You have overseen significant improvements in the early years provision at the school. The quality of teaching, learning and assessment has improved and is now typically good. Significant improvements have also been made to the outdoor environment, which now provides an exciting environment in which children can learn.

Improvements have been made to leadership. All members of the teaching staff now consider themselves to be leaders of learning. They support you in monitoring and evaluating different curriculum areas and contribute fully to the school's development.

You have also ensured that the pupils have regular opportunities to study different faiths, values and cultures. They study major world religions and learn about different cultures and customs through the school's thematic curriculum.

As a result of your work:

- teaching and learning are effective across the school and pupils achieve well
- pupils behave well, enjoy learning and attend regularly
- staff are fully supportive of you and your work to improve the school
- parents are highly supportive of the school and rightly believe that it is well led and well managed.

Staff and governors have high aspirations for the school and are committed to making further improvements. Comprehensive plans are in place to address areas of relative weakness and staff have the capacity to make these improvements. This inspection also identified the need to improve the quality of pupils' presentation and handwriting, and further develop provision in the pre-school.

Safeguarding is effective.

Staff and governors do all that they can to ensure that pupils are well cared for, safe and protected. You monitor the welfare of pupils closely and make appropriate referrals to outside agencies wherever this is needed. Regular training is provided for staff and appropriate checks are made on adults who work with pupils at the school. Safeguarding and behaviour policies are up to date and staff know what to do if they have any concerns. Children are extremely well cared for and all of the parents who responded to Parent View, Ofsted's online questionnaire, said that their children feel safe while in school. The leadership team has ensured that all safeguarding arrangements are fit for purpose and records are detailed and of high quality.

Inspection findings

- The effective leadership of teaching, learning and assessment has ensured that good standards have been maintained at Ravensden since the previous inspection. Over the past three years, attainment at the end of Key Stage 1 has been well above the national average in reading, writing and mathematics. The quality of work seen in pupils' books during this inspection indicates that pupils continue to make good progress in Key Stage 2 in these key areas of learning.
- Along with other school leaders, including governors, you have ensured that the school has maintained its inclusive approach and nurturing ethos. The school's curriculum is broad and balanced and helps pupils to learn about different faiths and cultures. Tolerance and respect are promoted through the

school's weekly focus on different values. Religious diversity is celebrated through the study of major world faiths and visits to local places of worship, including mosques, churches and gurdwaras. This helps to prepare pupils well for life in modern Britain.

- Governors bring a broad range of experience and expertise to their role and are actively involved in school life. They are well informed about the school and provide good levels of challenge and support for senior leaders that help to bring about improvements.
- The checks that senior leaders make on the quality of teaching, learning and assessment are effective. As well as observing teaching, you also look at the standard of work in pupils' books and the progress that they are making. You meet each half term with teachers to discuss pupils' progress and establish whether any pupils are falling behind. Where necessary, additional support is provided, often by teaching assistants who provide highly effective support within lessons and when supporting individual pupils.
- Since the previous inspection the governing body has taken responsibility for the pre-school setting, which is now located in a new building on the school site. Through this setting good links are established with parents, which help children to settle quickly and develop good learning behaviours. The environment, both indoors and in the outdoor area, is attractive and well organised. Good systems for assessing children's development are in place but these are not yet used well enough to ensure that children receive enough challenge to move them on in their learning.
- Improvements have been made to the Reception class. The indoor and outdoor areas are attractive and well organised and adults plan interesting learning activities that engage the interests of the children. Assessment is used well to assess the progress that children are making and careful planning ensures that children are challenged appropriately. As a result, children make good progress and are well prepared for the next stage of their learning when they move into Year 1.
- Staff are fully supportive of your leadership and welcome the many opportunities that are provided to engage in training and development. All members of the teaching staff contribute to subject leadership. They lead training and contribute to the regular reviews of teaching and learning.
- The school has worked effectively with parents to improve attendance. There has been an unremitting focus on the importance of attendance and the impact of absence on pupils' progress. As a result of these actions, rates of absence have decreased and attendance has been well above the national average for the past three years.
- Pupils enjoy school; they behave well and have very good attitudes to learning. They are polite and courteous and dress smartly, showing pride in their school uniform. They get on well with each other and are proud of their achievements. However, these attitudes are not always reflected in the quality of presentation in pupils' books. Teachers do not always challenge untidy work, and insufficient focus is placed on the quality of handwriting. As a result pupils do not always present their work as neatly as they should and the quality of handwriting is not as good as it should be.

- The local authority provides good support to the school. A school improvement adviser regularly works with school leaders, including governors, to provide challenge and support. Teaching staff value highly the support that they receive through local authority training events and the various subject networks involving local schools.
- Parents are highly supportive of the school. Some travel significant distances in order to enable their children to attend. Parents rightly believe that the school is well led and managed, that pupils behave well and that teaching is good. A very large majority of the parents who responded to Ofsted's online survey, Parent View, would recommend the school to other parents.

Next steps for the school

Leaders and governors should ensure that:

- the teaching of handwriting and the quality of presentation improves so that pupils show greater pride in their work
- assessment is used more effectively in the pre-school setting to plan activities which challenge children and help them to move on in their learning more quickly.

Yours sincerely

Paul Tomkow
Her Majesty's Inspector

Information about the inspection

During this inspection I met with you, all members of the teaching staff and four teaching assistants. I also met with four members of the governing body and a representative of the local authority. I looked at work in pupils' books from across the school and observed teaching in the early years and Key Stage 1. I scrutinised documents relating to the school's safeguarding and child protection arrangements and looked at the single central record. I looked at some of the reports that you have presented to governors, the school's self-evaluation and your current improvement plan. I looked at information about pupils' attendance, behaviour and welfare. I spoke to parents in the playground before school and considered the views of the 32 parents who had responded to Parent View. I also analysed the 10 responses to Ofsted's staff questionnaire.