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David Bertwistle
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Dear Mr Bertwistle

Short inspection of Rake CofE Primary School

Following my visit to the school on 19 April 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 January 2012.

This school continues to be good.

Leaders have maintained the good quality of education in the school since the last inspection. You continue to lead the school with vigour and determination, promoting a clear Christian ethos of care and aspiration for all. As a result, the popularity of the school has grown and pupil numbers have more than doubled. Supported and challenged well by governors, you and the staff aspire for the best achievement possible for each pupil. Your outward looking approach is a strength of your leadership in this small school. Parents and staff appreciate your care for the well-being of every pupil, family and colleague. Your current break from supporting leaders in other schools, so that you can focus on the needs of your own pupils and staff, is testament to your passion for Rake.

You have sustained the family atmosphere that pervaded the school when it was much smaller. All the staff care well for pupils and make themselves easily available for parents. Pupils of different ages play happily together at playtimes and enjoy eating lunch on 'family' tables. Pupils behave well, showing respect to the adults while taking care of one another and the school. This helps them to learn well. Lessons are calm and purposeful. Social times are happy and lively.

You have led effective action to improve the areas identified in the last inspection. Teachers check pupils' progress regularly, using methods developed in partnership with other local schools. Using this information and further assessments, the

inclusion leader ensures that additional support is provided promptly if gaps in pupils' knowledge and understanding are identified. Pupils' writing, on display and in their books, shows that older pupils are able to apply their phonics (the sounds that letters make) skills efficiently.

You and governors are not complacent, however. You are taking action to make further improvements to pupils' progress in phonics, particularly in the Reception and Year 1 class, and for the youngest pupils. You are ensuring that teaching throughout the school helps pupils to meet higher national expectations for mathematics introduced since the last inspection. This action is successfully tackling the decline in achievement reflected in the mathematics standards reached by Year 6 at the end of the last academic year. You have made attempts to reduce the high incidence of pupils taking unauthorised holidays in term-time, but without success. You recently discussed this issue with governors, who have not yet decided any further action they wish you to take.

Safeguarding is effective.

Pupils are kept safe in school and feel safe. Parents responding to Ofsted's online survey, Parent View, and those I spoke with, were overwhelmingly confident about the care and attention provided by staff. The required safeguarding procedures are firmly in place and staff are well trained, so they know how to respond to concerns. When staff or volunteers are recruited, all the necessary checks are completed in a timely way and recorded efficiently. A governor is suitably trained to oversee the recruitment of school staff.

The school's safeguarding policies are regularly reviewed and updated in line with local authority guidance. Daily supervision of pupils is ample and attentive. Supervisors play with the pupils, so that any problems are noticed swiftly and resolved. Risk assessments are completed when required, including for the school site and play equipment. Leaders work well with external agencies, making prompt referrals and ensuring attendance at meetings where families' needs are discussed.

Inspection findings

- Your consistency in upholding the Christian ethos of the school gives staff and parents confidence in your leadership. The way you develop and share leadership in the school empowers staff and supports improvement. Your work in other schools, and your openness to advice, ensure that continuing improvement at Rake is not limited by the school's small size and resources.
- Governors are proud of the school's heritage and actively maintain its Christian ethos and service to the community. When the local authority supported the school by extending the premises, governors raised additional funds to provide space for the school's increasing work with pupils with special educational needs or disability.
- Governors are well informed about pupils' progress. Detailed training in the autumn term focused on analysing the school's most recent performance

information. Governors support you well and ask relevant questions in meetings to check the information you bring them.

- Your well-judged recent appointment of a skilled and experienced inclusion leader has brought important expertise to the staff team. Parents told me they are confident that the school works well to identify and provide for their children's special educational needs or disability. The inclusion leader ensures that pupils who need to close gaps in their learning are supported well to do so. As a member of the senior team, she is influencing teaching positively, particularly by providing phonics training for teaching assistants in classes 1 and 2.
- The mathematics leader ensures that the school meets the latest requirements for mathematics, and brings ideas gained through her wider work as a university tutor. She has provided valuable training for staff and guidance for parents in how to help their children with mathematics at home. Older pupils told me that mathematics lessons have become increasingly challenging. A number told me, unprompted, that mathematics is now their favourite subject. Pupils' mathematics work shows that teachers are using increasingly imaginative and thought-provoking challenges to improve pupils' skills and understanding.
- Your evaluation of the school's strengths and areas for improvement is accurate. The school's improvement plans link well to this assessment and set out clearly the work staff need to do. Governors are clear how they will check progress in the planned work and the impact of leaders' actions on pupils' outcomes.
- You have accurately identified that pupils who do not achieve the expected standard in the Year 1 national phonics check are typically those with special educational needs or disability, or the youngest pupils. Most do go on to achieve the expected standard during Year 2, but you are right to increase your focus on securing better progress in phonics, from the start, for all pupils. Developments in class 1, including training for staff and the work of the inclusion leader, are supporting improvement.
- Children who do not achieve a good level of development by the end of the Reception year are also, typically, those with special educational needs or disability or the youngest children. The Reception teacher brings valuable ideas into the school from her work as a specialist leader advising other schools. The inclusion leader is supporting the teacher well to continue developing the early years provision. By assigning a governor to oversee the early years, the governors have ensured that they are well informed when making decisions about staffing and resources.
- The proportion of pupils with special educational needs or disability is higher than nationally, and increasing. These pupils make good progress due to the focused support they receive and the school's close partnership with parents. The special educational needs or disability governor's meetings with the inclusion leader, to review provision and pupils' progress, help governors make informed decisions about spending on special resources.
- The school has few pupils supported by the pupil premium (additional government funding for pupils entitled to receive free school meals and those looked after by the local authority). Due to the effective care and support they

receive, these pupils consistently make progress which is as good as, and often better than, their peers in the school. The number of these pupils is too small for any comparison to be made with the national picture.

- Teaching challenges the most-able pupils well. In 2015, the proportions of pupils who attained above the expected level at the end of key stage 1 were higher than seen nationally in reading, writing and mathematics. At the end of key stage 2, the proportions of pupils who attained above the expected level matched or exceeded the national figures in reading, writing, spelling and grammar.
- Pupils' achievement in mathematics at the end of key stage 2 in 2015 was below the national average. The teaching of mathematics in key stage 2 has been a focus for improvement this year, with effective action being taken to improve pupils' progress.
- Most pupils attend well. However, for a significant minority of pupils, unauthorised holidays taken in term-time interrupt their progress and teachers' plans. You and governors have discussed this issue and have taken some action to inform parents of their legal responsibilities. However, the issue persists.
- The local authority and diocese support the school well. Advisers' recommendations have helped develop planning in Reception year, teachers' leadership roles, and the way you check teaching.

Next steps for the school

Leaders and governors should ensure that:

- efforts are redoubled to ensure that the youngest pupils in Reception year and Year 1, and those with special educational needs or disability, make good progress, including in phonics
- unauthorised holidays, taken by pupils in term-time, reduce significantly.

I am copying this letter to the chair of the governing body, the director of education for the Diocese of Chichester and the director of children's services for West Sussex. This letter will be published on the Ofsted website.

Yours sincerely

Siân Thornton
Her Majesty's Inspector

Information about the inspection

I met with you to discuss your evaluation of the school's effectiveness and priorities for further improvement. We observed teaching in classes 1 and 2, and looked at teachers' planning. We checked pupils' mathematics work from every year group,

and pupils' writing in Reception and Years 1, 2 and 3. I met with the inclusion and mathematics leaders to discuss the impact of their leadership. Discussions were held with governors and a diocesan representative, and I spoke on the telephone with a representative of the local authority. Parents' views were considered through conversations in the playground at the start of the day and the 45 responses to Ofsted's online survey, Parent View. I talked with pupils at lunchtime and observed adults' supervision. The 18 responses to Ofsted's staff survey were analysed. I scrutinised information about pupils' achievement and attendance, the school's self-evaluation summary and improvement plan, records of leaders' checks on teaching, governing body minutes, safeguarding information, local authority reports and documents on the school's website.