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Mr Christopher Todd
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Dear Mr Todd

Short inspection of Singleton Church of England Primary School

Following my visit to the school on 17 May 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 July 2012.

This school continues to be good.

The headteacher has ensured that the ethos of the school, blending Christian values with the tenets of a Unicef 'Rights Respecting School', shines through. Pupils are highly knowledgeable about how to treat others well and this translates into practice in the way pupils look after each other. There are very high expectations of pupils' personal responsibility for their own conduct. Pupils meet these expectations, both in the classroom and in their social time.

The small size of the school, with only three classes, fosters a close family atmosphere. Pupils are very well known as individuals by staff, and great care is taken to support both their academic and pastoral development.

Some recent staffing changes have refreshed practice in the classroom and brought new expertise. This has strengthened teaching and helped to secure better progress for pupils in early years, Year 2 and Years 5 and 6.

Since the last inspection, the headteacher has taken effective steps to tackle the areas for improvement. Standards are now higher in writing. Pupils have more opportunities to write at length and for different audiences. For example, pupils in Years 5 and 6 are experimenting with writing diaries from perspectives ranging from an astronaut to a pencil sharpener. A new assessment system is in place which gives teachers useful information about how pupils are making progress. This

means they can plan lessons that are more carefully tuned to what pupils need to do to improve. Last year children in early years did not achieve well enough. Leaders tackled this quickly. A new team is in place who have brought a fresh approach. This has led to much more emphasis being placed on pupils' work in phonics (the sounds that letters make), with careful records of what they learn. Pupils are now making much better progress.

Cohorts at the school are often very small – fewer than 10. This means that there is often considerable variability in each year group and therefore it is difficult to make comparisons to national averages. Nonetheless, information from the school, related to expectations based on age, indicates an improving picture in pupils' reading and writing, and continued good progress in mathematics. At times the most able do not have work which is sufficiently challenging and they do not make accelerated progress in mathematics.

Safeguarding is effective

The leadership team has ensured that all safeguarding arrangements are fit for purpose and records are detailed and of high quality. Meticulous records are kept and procedures followed assiduously. Governors regularly check that the school's policies are effective. Pupils receive helpful advice about how to keep safe online. Staff have been suitably trained and you have ensured that all staff are clear about their duties with regard to radicalisation and extremism. Staff are aware of what to look for in vulnerable pupils and any who may be at risk. This is complemented by their very detailed knowledge about each individual. The school site is safe and securely fenced. Pupils are well supervised at breaktimes.

Inspection findings

- You foster a climate of high expectations for all, underpinned by a clear ethos, rooted in mutual respect. These values are displayed prominently from the front door to the main hall and classroom walls and to the trees adorned with 'make a change' coloured pom-poms on the field. All serve as constant reminders to pupils and staff as to what the school holds dear.
- You have implemented a new system to assess pupils' progress and attainment, in line with the new national curriculum. Teachers have useful information to help them plan lessons to meet pupils' needs. A process of internal checking and external moderation means that you know these judgements are accurate.
- You rightly identified that progress of pupils in early years was not good enough. A new teacher is now in post, working alongside a teaching assistant with particular skills in delivering phonics. As a consequence, early years pupils are now making much stronger gains. The school's information indicates that all pupils are on track to meet the expected standard in phonics. In Year 1, pupils who had fallen behind have largely caught up this year, because of daily opportunities to practise. Pupils are now on track to achieve the expected standard in reading and writing, in contrast to 2015.

- You and the governors have worked together to secure a new teaching space for Year 2. Previously, this group often had to work in the school hall. You recognised that this was not conducive to effective learning, especially for those pupils with special educational needs or disability, and this held them back. 'The Lodge' provides Year 2 pupils with their own dedicated space and class teacher. The skilful intervention of the teaching assistant supports those pupils with special educational needs or disability who are now making good progress because they can place their focus fully on their work.
- You have rightly focused on closing the gap for pupils with special educational needs or disability. In almost every case these gaps have closed, particularly in reading. Targeted support from a reading specialist has been particularly effective in helping pupils catch up. Teachers are including this information to plan activities to help pupils improve in lessons. The special educational needs coordinator plans and delivers individual programmes for pupils, as well as giving valuable advice to classroom teachers. Consequently, the requirements for these pupils are now better known and met.
- Each year there is a particular focus, such as 2016 being the year of reading. This highlights the importance of a core subject for pupils. However, as the new staff teams establish, the leadership of subjects needs to strengthen to ensure pupils' progress in all key areas is developed more consistently. Leaders need to ensure that they are helping colleagues continue to raise standards across the curriculum.
- The changes made to the way teachers give feedback are welcomed by pupils. They appreciate the advice because it helps them make their work better. In particular, pupils really value the opportunity to talk to their teachers about setting personal goals. These are regularly reviewed and changed when a pupil achieves their goal; as one pupil commented, 'It helps to motivate us.'
- Teachers plan engaging and stimulating lessons to develop pupils' wider knowledge and understanding. The topic-based approach creatively weaves elements of the curriculum together to provide pupils with a rich diet. For example, in Years 5 and 6, pupils studying Greek myths were also considering Olympic and Paralympic values, as well as elements of design and communication through their studies. Pupils have opportunities to explore other cultures and ways of living, preparing them well for life in modern Britain.
- Teaching assistants are knowledgeable and know the needs of pupils well. They offer timely support as well as encouraging pupils to work independently and building their resilience.
- Pupils display exceptionally positive attitudes to learning. They apply themselves diligently to their tasks, are eager to improve and make their work the best it can be. Standards of presentation in books are high with neatly presented work. From Reception onwards the habits of good learning are established. Consequently, pupils are keen to excel. High levels of concentration were displayed across the school, and are exemplified by Years 3 and 4, as they worked out for themselves how to build a water clock,

combining their knowledge from science and design and technology.

- Children in early years make good progress because their learning is securely rooted in thoughtfully planned activities. A series of lessons on 'people that help us' drew everyone into a lively debate of a high standard. This is complemented by visits from service personnel, which stimulate great curiosity. Children's social skills are developed through high expectations and pupils listen to one another attentively.
- The very few disadvantaged pupils make progress in line with their classmates. Teachers are clear about who these pupils are and plan activities to suit their needs. Where pupils fall behind, teachers intervene to make sure pupils catch up quickly.
- The evidence from pupils' books indicates that pupils secure a wide breadth of knowledge across subjects, which include French, drama, art and music as well as the core of English and mathematics. Most display typical or better progress across the curriculum because units of work help pupils to make links, for example connections between work in science on sound and their musical study. However, the most able are not consistently given sufficiently challenging work to do.
- The school promotes a strong reading culture. Author visits, a breakfast book club and assemblies where teachers discuss their favourite literature all kindle a love of reading. Pupils are encouraged to read frequently and a team of volunteers has been recruited to listen to pupils read aloud, particularly disadvantaged pupils, so that they can practise their skills.
- Pupils' behaviour is exemplary. Their conduct around the school is courteous and thoughtful. At lunch time, pupils all eat together in the main hall in a calm and orderly manner. They look out for each other, mix well and demonstrate the values that characterise the school.
- Attendance is good. Pupils are keen to come to school. One parent explained that their child could never wait to return after the school holidays. Leaders work with individual families to support the rare examples when pupils' attendance is not regular enough.
- Many of the governors are relatively new to their roles. They are highly ambitious for the staff and pupils. They have undertaken training and know how to use the information they have about the school to hold the headteacher to account. They ask searching questions to check on the impact leaders' actions are making.
- The parents the inspector spoke to were overwhelmingly pleased with the progress made by their children. Some had moved from other schools and praised staff and pupils alike for helping their children settle in so quickly.
- The local authority has provided helpful support and advice, pointing out areas for improvement, such as information required on the school website. Leaders have been quick to act on this. The school works in partnership with a group of local schools to share good practice and check the accuracy of their judgements about standards.

Next steps for the school

Leaders and those responsible for governance should ensure that:

- teachers plan activities that stretch and challenge the most able
- subject leadership is developed to ensure pupils' progress is maintained across the core areas of the curriculum.

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

Yours sincerely

Helena Read
Her Majesty's Inspector

Information about the inspection

I visited eight lessons in the school, four jointly with the headteacher. I spoke with pupils in lessons and looked at some of their work. I observed pupils at playtime and lunchtime. I met with the headteacher, a group of pupils and a group of governors. I spoke with a representative from the local authority. I considered the responses from members of staff and pupils to their confidential online questionnaires. I took careful account of 15 responses from parents. I looked at documents, including information about performance management and the quality of teaching, information about pupils' learning and progress and minutes of meetings.