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Mrs A Coppitters  
Headteacher  
Sedley's Church of England Voluntary Aided Primary School  
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Dear Mrs Coppitters

### **Short inspection of Sedley's Church of England Voluntary Aided Primary School**

Following my visit to the school on 2 November 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 September 2011.

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

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

#### **Safeguarding is effective.**

The leadership team has ensured that all safeguarding arrangements are fit for purpose and records are detailed and of high quality.

You have created a safe and orderly environment in a set of buildings of historical interest. It is, however, challenging as a location for contemporary learning. You have carefully used a range of modern safeguarding tools such as closed circuit television cameras and access control technologies to ensure that pupils stay safe at all times. You communicate calm, a sense of order and empathy. This is acknowledged by many. The staff has adopted your style so that the atmosphere is pleasant and purposeful around the school.

The checks that the school makes on anyone wishing to volunteer or work at the school are very thorough. The school's secretary has created an exemplary register of these checks. Governors examine the records monthly in order to ensure that they meet statutory requirements. Governors, with your help, also ensure that safeguarding training is up to date and that staff are kept well informed about

changes to requirements or practice. Staff are vigilant. They are skilled at identifying signs of pupils with emerging concerns. You take care to assess risks related to any activity and you keep a simple log of any incidents. As a result pupils told me that they feel safe in school. Nearly all the parents agreed.

Pupils also told me that they like coming to school and said they were happy. Parents confirmed this to be the case. The atmosphere in the playground before school was pleasing. Pupils were able to identify occasions when a tiny minority of their classmates do not behave as you expect them to. Pupils know what to do if they are worried about anything. They also know that they should 'tell a teacher' if they are concerned, unhappy or feel unsafe. Pupils were able to give a good account of how they have been taught to keep themselves safe online. They know what to do if a stranger contacts them when they are playing online games.

### **Inspection findings**

- Leaders and governors have a realistic and accurate view of the school. They know that pupils generally attain good standards at the end of each key stage. Pupils' performance is at least as good as that of similar pupils nationally in reading, writing and mathematics. Often it is better.
- Leaders are also aware that pupils do not make as much progress as they could. The most able pupils and/or those who are high attaining do not always go on to attain standards that exceed national age-expectations.
- Pupils are, though, well prepared for the next stage of their education. About a third each year pass the Kent selection test and secure a place in a grammar school. This compares favourably with the regional average.
- Pupils are also suitably prepared for life in modern Britain. As well as learning effectively about their own Christian faith, they receive good-quality teaching in religious education about the principal religions of the United Kingdom.
- Pupils attend the Dartford festival of lights, which is a multicultural celebration. Pupils can recite parts of ancient Hindu stories and can identify accurately Indian deities which they have learned about over time. Pupils also celebrated the Queen's birthday, attend a uniformed church parade monthly and mark special occasions in the nation's history such as Remembrance Sunday.
- The school's contribution to pupils' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development is strong. Pupils give willingly to charities such as Macmillan Cancer Care. Pupils benefit from the historic building in which the school is housed. They understand the significance of the converted air-raid shelter and the historical commitment to education of Sir John Sedley.
- Pupils are charming. They are polite, well behaved and excited about learning. The vast majority of pupils behave extremely well. During my visit, no behaviour was seen to be of concern and teachers kept children on task skilfully and sympathetically for the vast majority of each lesson.
- There are very few disadvantaged pupils at Sedley's, often only one per class. As a result, the performance of these pupils was not evaluated as a group during this inspection.

- Similarly, there are currently no children who have an education, health and care plan or statement of special educational needs. There is a tiny proportion of pupils who receive support for their special educational needs and/or disabilities. It was not possible, therefore, to determine any specific patterns or trends in the progress, attainment or well-being of this group of pupils overall.
- Teachers set high expectations for pupils' behaviour and set good examples in the way they speak to each other and the pupils. They encourage positive attitudes at all times. Parents appreciate the happy and ordered environment created in the school and several travel considerable distances to enable their children to benefit from it.
- Teachers use a wide range of learning activities to support pupils' acquisition of knowledge and development of understanding. In the key stage 1 class, pupils were developing literacy skills by examining the characters in 'Marvel' magazines. Their use of adjectives was impressive. All pupils' use of the technical language of English, such as 'homophones', 'compound adjectives' and 'alliteration', to account for what they are reading is accurate. It is remarkable for pupils in Year 1.
- Pupils read well. They select books that are appropriate for their age. They have developed a range of skills to use when the text is tricky or unfamiliar.
- Children get a good start to reading in Reception. They have regular opportunities to practise with the teacher. This is also the case with writing. Key stage 1 pupils continue to practise on a daily basis so that their work is usually well presented and set out neatly.
- Unusually, there is currently only one adult working in the early years. This means that play is not always as focused as it could be, especially when the teacher is working closely with specific groups of children. The plan to take on a new member of staff is commendable. This will allow more time for the teacher to extend the range of stimuli as well as the variety of activities from which children will learn and develop.
- Teachers have developed an effective system for tracking how each pupil is doing in each class. Teachers demonstrated how, as a group, they meet regularly to discuss the progress of pupils. This means that all members of staff are aware of what each pupil across the school knows, understands and can do.
- Pupils who have gaps in their knowledge or skills are identified quickly. Where possible, these pupils are provided with extra tuition to help them catch up. Consequently, it is rare for any pupil to fall too far behind their peers.
- Good teaching in mathematics, in all parts of the school, is supplemented by focused sessions for those who have not readily grasped new learning in the subject. A few of the most able older pupils are beginning to demonstrate 'mastery' in mathematics. Not enough have achieved these high standards in the past.
- Teachers assess pupils' work accurately. They know that some of the more able pupils could be inspired to aim even higher and achieve even more. The new tracking system makes this clear.

- Pupils benefit from a broad and balanced curriculum. Limitations on space at the school mean that it fulfils its obligations to deliver effective physical education by transporting pupils to an off-site gymnasium and swimming pool.
- Recently, you have established a place for Latin on the curriculum. Pupils in Years 5 and 6 pupils receive music tuition from the Dartford Choral Project in collaboration with other Dartford schools. The amateurs (singing teachers) are, or have been, recent students at Trinity School of Music. Pupils learn well in science so that pupils in Year 6 in 2016 attained standards well above the national average for this subject. The imaginative conversion of the air-raid shelter into a library supports pupils' reading. It also provides Year 6 with a special place to meet and work together.
- Leaders are committed to ensuring that the formal curriculum is supplemented with high-quality extra-curricular activities. Where possible, due to the small number of children in each year group, leaders organise teams to compete locally in sporting competitions.
- Parents are, for the most part, pleased with the information they receive about school matters and how well their child is doing. Some would like more instant access through a range of different contemporary technologies. This would make planning easier for families. This is particularly the case when times are allocated for consultations about each pupil's progress. Some parents also noted that information about in-service training days is sometimes issued close to the actual day. Similarly, other changes to the calendar are not always made in a timely or convenient manner.
- Leaders recognise that some of the school's information could be made more readily and easily accessible. They are currently reviewing the content of the website, especially the current versions of each policy, so that it meets the Secretary of State's requirements consistently for the publication of statutory information. Governors are overseeing this process.

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

Leaders and those responsible for governance should ensure that:

- most-able and/or higher-attaining pupils flourish and a greater proportion regularly exceed age-related expectations
- the learning environment and practice in Reception continue to strengthen
- communication with key stakeholders is sharply focused and makes more effective use of contemporary technologies.

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

Yours sincerely

Dr Simon Hughes  
**Her Majesty's Inspector**

### **Information about the inspection**

You led me on a tour of the school and we observed learning jointly in all of the classes. We met several times and examined the school's own evaluation of its performance with the senior teacher. I met with governors and spoke on the phone to the school's improvement adviser and the director of education for the diocese of Rochester. I examined a wide range of the school's documents, especially those that were not available on the website prior to the inspection. I spoke with several pupils on the playground, in lessons and informally around the school. I listened to four Year 4 pupils read and discussed their work in mathematics, English, religious education and science. I looked at other pupils' work in their books during lessons and at a small sample of pupils from the previous Year 6. This work scrutiny was helpfully aided by the Year 5/6 teacher.