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Tracey Jerome  
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Dear Mrs Jerome

### **Short inspection of Hartlip Endowed Church of England Primary School**

Following my visit to the school on 16 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 February 2012.

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

Following your example, effective and ambitious leadership at different levels has ensured that the school is improving continuously. You told me that the journey since the previous inspection has not always been a smooth one. However, your focus on improving outcomes for pupils has not wavered. With other leaders, you use a broad range of checks and information to keep a constant check on how well the school is performing. You use this intelligence well to identify and target areas to improve and take effective actions to ensure that they do.

Pupils told me that they enjoy school. This was reflected in their focus and engagement during the lessons I visited, as well as in the quality of their work. At times, pupils were notably excited by the tasks they were set, channelling this enthusiasm to get on quickly and productively. Pupils feel secure to take risks and have positive attitudes to learning from their mistakes. However, this positive picture is not fully reflected in pupils' attendance. You use a good range of strategies to encourage pupils not to miss school. For example, you offer awards and certificates, including the 'eggsellent attendance' award: a draw to take home the eggs laid by the school's chickens for pupils with full attendance for the week. However, although improving, disadvantaged pupils and those who have special educational needs and/or disabilities, in particular, still do not attend

regularly enough.

Following the previous inspection, leaders were asked to raise pupils' attainment in writing. Pupils now make good progress overall and write with increasing flair. Provisional results show that recent Year 6 leavers had made significantly above average progress across key stage 2. With other leaders, you analysed why pupils did not perform as well in the grammar, punctuation and spelling test – believing correctly that pupils' writing reflected a better standard. Following this first experience of the new tests, you are taking measured steps to make sure that pupils will be better prepared for them in the future. You have correctly identified that standards of spelling are variable across the school and are working with other leaders and teachers to increase the focus on this aspect of pupils' writing.

You lead staff in making frequent checks on the progress of current pupils. As well as checking that individual needs are well met, you use this information strategically to compare and improve the performance of different groups. For example, you and your deputy identified that boys and pupils who have special educational needs and/or disabilities were not always making the same strong progress as their peers. This type of analysis and use of information was another key area for improvement from the previous inspection that you have successfully addressed. You use your analysis to take action to ensure that no pupils underachieve.

Through our visits to lessons, my discussions with pupils and scrutiny of their work I could see how teachers are challenging the most able to achieve well. This is especially true as they reach the top of the school. Progress for different groups of pupils, including the most able, is still slightly more variable at key stage 1 because pupils do not build consistently well on their starting points in Year 1. Also, although pupils make good progress overall through varied opportunities in a broad and balanced curriculum, outcomes in English and mathematics are stronger typically than other subjects.

You use pupil premium funding effectively. Any differences when comparing the performance of disadvantaged pupils with others nationally have diminished well and often disappeared. Governors explained how they focus sharply on the impact of particular spending decisions on pupils' outcomes; for example, providing extra teaching by qualified teachers. However, disadvantaged pupils seldom do as well as their most-able peers.

### **Safeguarding is effective.**

Safeguarding has a very high profile in this school at all levels. Leaders ensure that concerns are taken seriously and carefully documented. Records show that staff are vigilant to low-level concerns. As you said, when talking to staff about how they should respond to any concerns: 'If it enters your head, it is relevant.' Records are well organised and include chronological summaries to show at a glance the key information over time. Governors

take an active role in ensuring that safeguarding is effective. For example, they follow local authority audits to check the school's procedures, finding ways to go beyond minimum requirements to secure best practice. Governors gave me examples of how they challenge leaders to provide evidence to back up their assertions by saying: 'Show me.'

Leaders work closely with other professionals for the protection of pupils, for example hosting multi-agency meetings at the school. You have taken action in partnership with the local attendance officer to reduce absence; for example, 'late gates' greeting parents at the start of the day to stress the importance of timely arrival.

Pupils told me that they feel safe in school and know who to go to if they have any worries. Parents report that you and your staff are approachable and most say that any concerns are dealt with well. Extensive school records show that concerns are taken seriously. During the inspection, the school was marking anti-bullying week and International Day for Tolerance. Asked to reflect on what tolerance means to them, pupils had come up with some thoughtful responses. Younger children were excited as they followed up the key safety messages that they had learned from a planned visit from the police the previous day.

### **Inspection findings**

- Children make a strong start in the early years. The proportion of children reaching the good level of development, therefore properly prepared for the Year 1 curriculum, has shown a rising trend.
- A historical gap comparing boys in school with others nationally at the end of Reception Year has reduced well. I observed boys learning purposefully from the rich choice of activities in the outdoor area. They were given the chance to develop a range of skills through being set joint challenges; for example, working together to build Santa's sleigh, as well as writing lists for him to use.
- Pupils across the school, including in key stage 1, know how to improve their writing. Imaginative tasks motivate pupils to write for a range of purposes. Disadvantaged pupils in lower key stage 2 take strides in developing a range of sentence structures. As pupils mature, even the most able pupils are stretched. For example, pupils write so that the reader can infer a character's emotion from their actions or description.
- Procedures for exchanging helpful and meaningful feedback have become habitual for pupils and staff. Pupils value the advice and guidance that the agreed strategies provide, often seeking and acting on this feedback unprompted. These embedded processes evidently help pupils move on strongly in their learning, particularly in English and mathematics.
- Pupils use and recall mathematical vocabulary well. Younger pupils, in particular, develop their understanding of mathematical concepts through using a range of apparatus and equipment in practical activities. Most-

able pupils are given opportunities to work at greater depth, for example learning how to work systematically to solve an open-ended task. Older pupils are clearly used to applying their skills in different contexts and I could see how enthused they were by these tasks.

- Comparing the performance of disadvantaged pupils with other pupils nationally, differences have diminished well. Provisional results for 2016 show that from their particular starting points, pupils performed in line with others nationally at both key stages 1 and 2. They do similarly well in the Year 1 phonics screening check. Overall phonics results rose again this year, following a slight dip. All pupils that did not meet the expected standard the previous year caught up in Year 2.
- Leaders, including leaders of particular subjects or aspects of the school's work, show no complacency. They constantly seek ways to improve by analysing available information and considering carefully the right actions to take as a result. For example, thinking carefully about which texts or topics may promote the greatest interest and progress for boys to help them catch up with girls where there are differences.
- Most staff, pupils and parents are positive about behaviour. A few pupils and parents expressed concerns about bullying, although these mostly related to past rather than ongoing matters. Extensive records kept by leaders, and discussions with leaders and staff, demonstrate that concerns are taken seriously, investigated and dealt with effectively.

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

Leaders and those responsible for governance should ensure that:

- pupils sustain substantial progress across the curriculum to lift achievement further and ensure that more most-able pupils reach the highest standards, including those that may also be disadvantaged
- attendance is brought at least in line with national averages, especially for disadvantaged pupils and those who have special educational needs and/or disabilities.

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

Yours sincerely

Clive Dunn  
**Her Majesty's Inspector**

## **Information about the inspection**

I visited all classes with you and your deputy. As well as observing the teaching and learning that was taking place, I reviewed the work in pupils' books over time and talked with them about their learning. I scrutinised a small additional sample of work. I reviewed your own evaluations of the school's performance and analysed information about pupils' past outcomes. I considered some of the information available on the school's website and looked closely at your records of incidents and concerns, including checking those that related to safeguarding. I held meetings with pupils, staff, leaders, governors and representatives of the local authority and diocese. I also spoke informally with parents. I analysed 33 responses to the online survey, Parent View, as well as 33 responses to the pupil questionnaire and eight from staff. I considered all written comments added to these alongside other inspection evidence. Throughout these activities, I focused particularly on: how successfully leaders had tackled issues identified at the previous inspection; attendance; safeguarding; disadvantaged and most-able pupils; and how well any variation comparing the performance of boys and girls is reducing.