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Ms Sarah Oliver
Headteacher
Rowledge Church of England Controlled Primary School
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Dear Ms Oliver

Short inspection of Rowledge Church of England Controlled Primary School

Following my visit to the school on 10 January 2017, 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 May 2012.

This school continues to be good.

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

Since your appointment in June 2015, you have worked warmly and constructively with all members of staff, ensuring a sustained focus on improving teaching and learning. Your commitment and determination to ensure that all pupils achieve well have been central to making sure teachers have high expectations of pupils' learning. You have challenged teachers to improve their practice, providing them with good-quality support. You have successfully tackled an element of less-effective teaching in your mission to secure the very best education for pupils. You and your staff provide strong role models for pupils and for each other.

Governors and staff are as ambitious for the school as you are. They share your high expectations and aspirations for all pupils' achievements. You have accurately identified priorities for future developments.

You and the leadership team have taken effective action to tackle the areas for improvement identified at the time of the previous inspection. The quality of teaching, learning and assessment has improved considerably since your appointment and you have established consistent assessment procedures.

Pupils want to do their best, are clear about teachers' expectations and complete their work carefully. The oldest pupils say that they feel very well prepared for secondary school. They say that their teachers take learning beyond what they need to know. This helps pupils to feel confident about their learning and about the next steps in their education.

Pupils enjoy school and behave well. Pupils are polite, friendly and welcoming. For example, they routinely greet adults and each other with a cheery 'good morning'. They proudly represent the school's values of kindness, honesty and respect. Playtimes and lunchtimes are happy, relaxed occasions for pupils to play games and catch up with friends. They play together harmoniously and are kind to each other. Pupils feel very safe in school and say that adults sort out any worries quickly.

You have strengthened teamwork considerably. Strong communication means that staff and parents speak confidently about the direction you are taking to improve the school. You and the leadership team have worked very constructively with pupils, parents and staff to review and clarify the school's aims and values.

Parents are highly positive about the school's work. They told me that you constantly look for ways to improve pupils' achievement and to enhance pupils' experience of school. Parents appreciate the way the school focuses on making sure pupils are happy in school, helping them to develop into mature young people by the end of Year 6. They appreciate the equally strong focus you and your colleagues give to developing pupils' personal skills, as well as their academic achievement. Parents of pupils new to the school comment on the way teachers and leaders make sure that children settle quickly and make friends.

You and your leadership team recognise the need to embed and strengthen the improvements in the quality of teaching, learning and assessment made over the past year, so that all pupils achieve their full potential in writing and mathematics, particularly the most able and disadvantaged pupils during key stage 1. You have rightly identified that new assessment procedures could be used more rigorously by leaders, governors and teachers to check the progress made by different groups of pupils and to identify where additional support is needed to plan learning.

Safeguarding is effective.

You have raised the profile of safeguarding since your appointment. You make sure that safeguarding issues are considered during weekly staff meetings and encourage staff to raise concerns, no matter how small, at any time. Your emphasis that 'it could happen here' means that all members of staff give pupils' safety a high priority. Comprehensive training ensures that members of staff are knowledgeable about safeguarding, understand their responsibilities and are alert to pupils' needs. You and your colleagues work together effectively to monitor and support pupils' well-being. The leadership team ensures that all safeguarding arrangements are fit for purpose. Records are detailed and of a high quality.

Strong relationships contribute to pupils' safety and well-being. Leaders and staff know individual pupils very well and so notice and pay attention to any changes in behaviour. Pupils feel valued because their teachers listen with interest to what they have to say.

Inspection findings

- Teachers in all year groups have increased their expectations of pupils' learning since your appointment and pupils' progress has improved. Teachers check pupils' understanding more regularly and accurately than before and are clearer about how well pupils are learning. However, teachers do not always use this information well enough to plan work at a suitable level of difficulty for pupils of all abilities. As a result, some of the most able pupils, including those who are disadvantaged, make slower progress than they should in writing and mathematics.
- The proportion of children achieving a good level of development at the end of Reception is consistently higher than the national average and rising. This ensures that children are well placed for learning in Year 1. However, in recent years, an element of weaker teaching in key stage 1 has slowed pupils' progress, particularly for the most able pupils. While pupils' attainment at the end of key stage 1 matched national averages in 2016, some of the most able pupils did not achieve the levels of attainment expected of them by the end of Year 2. More rigorous procedures for checking and supporting teachers' performance and effective training mean that the quality of teaching in key stage 1 is now much better.
- Arrangements already in place to further support and train teachers are making a notable difference to the quality of teaching. However, leaders and governors are well aware of the need to sustain recent improvements in teaching, particularly during key stage 1. They have established rigorous checks on teachers' performance and have increased teachers' accountability for pupils' achievement.
- Leaders have introduced a consistent approach to assessing pupils' progress. As a result, teachers, leaders and governors have a clearer view of the quality of teaching and pupils' learning. Leaders and governors check the progress made by different groups of pupils, including those who are disadvantaged. However, they do not yet go far enough in using assessment information to question why some pupils are making slower progress than others and to provide extra help more promptly where needed.
- Most pupils attend regularly and attendance rates are consistently higher than the national average. Leaders have secured substantial improvements in attendance and punctuality for the small number of pupils who attend less frequently, including those who are disadvantaged.
- High-quality support, such as that provided in the nurture group, makes a significant difference to pupils' attitudes, attendance and well-being.

Next steps for the school

Leaders and those responsible for governance should ensure that:

- the most able pupils, including those who are disadvantaged, achieve their full potential in writing and mathematics, particularly during key stage 1
- leaders, governors and teachers build on improved assessment procedures by tracking the progress made by different groups of pupils more rigorously, particularly the most able pupils and disadvantaged pupils, and swiftly provide focused support where needed
- teachers pay more attention to pupils' starting points when planning work for pupils of differing abilities, especially the most able pupils.

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

Yours sincerely

Julie Sackett
Ofsted Inspector

Information about the inspection

During the inspection, I met with you, your deputy head and five governors, including the two co-chairs. I also talked with a local authority representative on the telephone. You and I visited all classes and the nurture group. During these observations, I talked with pupils about their learning and looked at the work in their books. You and I also reviewed a range of pupils' workbooks separately. I spoke with some pupils during playtime and with parents informally at the start of the school day. I took account of 120 responses to Ofsted's online Parent View questionnaire, 18 questionnaire responses from members of staff and to pupils' responses to one of your own surveys. I reviewed the school's website and sampled a range of documents, including your summary of the school's effectiveness, the school's strategic development plan and documents relating to safeguarding. I also looked at information about pupils' learning and progress, notes of a local authority visit and records relating to safeguarding and attendance.