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Dear Ms Tormey

Short inspection of St Katharine's Knockholt Church of England Voluntary Aided Primary School

Following my visit to the school on 22 February 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 February 2013.

This school continues to be good.

The leadership team has maintained the good quality of education in the school since the last inspection. You have put together a cohesive and effective team of teachers and support staff who are committed to pupils' achievement and well-being. Staff share your passionately held belief in the importance of a nurturing environment and a rich, broad and varied curriculum.

At the time of the previous inspection, inspectors identified pupils' good progress in their learning and their outstanding behaviour as strengths of the school. Inspectors also praised the consistently strong teaching seen in the school and your role in securing pupils' positive attitudes to their learning. You have maintained and continued to build on these strengths over the last four years.

Inspectors also identified two areas for improvement. First, they recommended that teachers should give pupils more opportunities to take responsibility for their own learning and ensure that they know their next steps. You have been successful in addressing this recommendation. You have given teachers opportunities to work together to plan an exciting curriculum, share good practice and check that their assessment of pupils' work is accurate. As a result, pupils in the school, in particular the most able, continue to make strong progress in their learning. This is because of the well-planned opportunities they have to develop their skills, knowledge and understanding, and the accurate information they receive about their current

achievement and next steps.

Inspectors also recommended that you improve the quality of subject leadership by ensuring that leaders make regular checks on the quality of pupils' learning. Consequently, you have invested heavily in training for your subject leaders, which means that they now have a sharp understanding of effective approaches to teaching and learning in their subjects. They use this understanding to good effect, making frequent checks on how pupils are doing and giving teachers sensible advice on how to improve their practice.

Working with your leadership team and governing body, you continue to improve pupils' outcomes. You have wisely identified a small number of carefully chosen priorities for the current year. These include a focus on pupils' problem-solving skills in mathematics across the school, and on pupils' writing, particularly in key stage 1.

Parents are overwhelmingly positive about the school. Those who responded to the online questionnaire, Parent View, and those who spoke to me informally at the start of the day rightly praise the school's nurturing culture. They also appreciate the many opportunities the school provides and the willingness of staff to go the extra mile for their children. One parent wrote, 'My children have made excellent progress and the school has a caring ethos', while another said, 'I feel very lucky that our children attend this lovely village school.'

Safeguarding is effective.

Pupils' welfare is of paramount importance to you, your staff and your governors. You have made all the appropriate checks on people who work or volunteer at the school. In addition, all staff and governors have received safeguarding training that reflects the most up-to-date guidance. Staff are ever vigilant to any changes in pupils' behaviour. They report concerns promptly and leaders responsible for safeguarding follow up any concerns assiduously. Where it is necessary to involve social services in a safeguarding matter, leaders are tenacious in ensuring that pupils' needs are prioritised.

Pupils feel safe and know how to keep themselves safe, including when using the internet. They report that bullying is rare, but that when it does happen, teachers deal with it effectively. They are hugely proud of their school, and their behaviour is always good and at times impeccable. The school is a warm, open and tolerant community. One pupil said, 'It's like being part of a family here.'

Inspection findings

- At the start of the inspection, we agreed to focus on the following areas: how well pupils who have special educational needs and/or disabilities do in their learning; how well pupils perform in reading, writing and mathematics across the school; how well the curriculum promotes equality of opportunity; how well leaders ensure that pupils attend school regularly; and how effectively governors carry out their duties.

- Pupils who have special educational needs and/or disabilities currently at the school make strong progress as a result of consistently good teaching that meets their needs. The special educational needs coordinator (SENCo) provides effective support to teachers. As a result, they plan work that is well tailored to pupils' individual learning needs. In addition, teaching assistants provide a wide range of well-targeted interventions to pupils who have special educational needs and/or disabilities. The SENCo is rigorous in checking that these interventions have the desired impact. You are aware that a small number of pupils in one year group are not making the progress expected of them. You have rightly put in place additional staffing and resources to support these pupils. This support is beginning to bear fruit.
- Pupils in the school, including disadvantaged pupils and the most able, make good progress in all subjects from the Reception class through to Year 6. Outcomes in phonics are above the national average. The most able pupils achieve outcomes above national averages in reading, writing, mathematics and science. Outcomes in reading are particularly strong. Pupils say they enjoy reading, and the library is bright and welcoming.
- We looked at the progress of lower and average prior attaining pupils in writing at key stage 1 and in mathematics at key stage 2. While their progress is broadly similar to or above national figures, you are aware that these pupils have made slower progress than in reading. You have ensured a relentless focus on problem-solving skills in mathematics and on opportunities for writing in a variety of styles in key stage 1. As a result, pupils' confidence in writing and mathematics has grown and the differences in achievement in reading, writing and mathematics are diminishing.
- The broad, balanced and varied curriculum is a distinctive feature of the school. You are passionate about the role of the curriculum in engaging pupils' interest and in ensuring equality of opportunity. Your commitment to the arts has ensured that all pupils have access to a wide range of creative subjects. In a dance lesson, pupils were engrossed in representing the Great Fire of London through movement. In a gymnastics lesson, pupils supported and encouraged one another, so that all could complete the routines. Regular themed days provide pupils with rich and memorable experiences. On the day of the inspection, Year 3 pupils enjoyed an active day on life and customs in ancient Egypt. Pupils have frequent opportunities to sing, play and perform in school and in the local community. Pupils also benefit from a wide range of trips and visits, which they speak about with enthusiasm.
- Historically, pupils' rates of attendance have been at or above average. However, in 2016, attendance dipped to below the national average for primary schools for all groups of pupils. This was particularly so for those pupils in receipt of free school meals and those who have special educational needs and/or disabilities. The school accurately identified the reasons for this and took the right actions. Rates of attendance are now once again close to the national average for primary schools.
- Governors have a good understanding of the school's strengths and weaknesses and are committed to its success. They provide robust challenge and support to

leaders in the school through effective committees. They check what leaders tell them in a range of ways, including by visiting the school regularly and by seeking external advice when necessary. Governors carry out their statutory responsibilities diligently, including for safeguarding. They monitor the impact of the pupil premium grant and sport premium carefully.

Next steps for the school

Leaders and those responsible for governance should ensure that:

- outcomes in mathematics continue to improve so that pupils' progress in mathematics is in line with that achieved in reading
- standards in pupils' writing improve further, particularly in key stage 1.

I am copying this letter to the chair of the governing body, the Director of Education for the Diocese of Rochester, the regional schools commissioner and the Director of Children's Services for Kent. This letter will be published on the Ofsted website.

Yours sincerely

Gary Holden
Her Majesty's Inspector

Information about the inspection

I met with you, other leaders, teachers, pupils, the chair of the governing body and members of the governing body. I also spoke with the local authority improvement adviser linked to the school on the telephone. I took into account 33 responses to Ofsted's online questionnaire, Parent View, 29 pupil questionnaire responses and 18 staff survey responses. I observed pupils' behaviour at break and around the school. I also spoke to a number of parents at the beginning of the school day. We visited all classes and scrutinised a sample of pupils' work. I analysed a number of documents provided by the school, including information about pupils' progress, and records of safeguarding checks, policies and procedures. In addition, we discussed your own evaluation of the school's effectiveness.