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Piccadilly Gate
Store Street
Manchester
M1 2WD

T 0300 123 4234
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Mrs Amanda Gander-Miller and Mrs Alison Flynn
Head of School and Executive Headteacher
Frant Church of England Primary School
Church Lane
Frant
Tunbridge Wells
East Sussex
TN3 9DX

Dear Mrs Gander-Miller and Mrs Flynn

Short inspection of Frant Church of England Primary School

Following my visit to the school on 21 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 June 2012.

This school continues to be good.

Since you were both appointed, you have successfully led the school through a period of great change. This has included the formal federation with Mark Cross Church of England Primary School. You have focused relentlessly on improving the quality and consistency of teaching across the school. Your staff are living up to your high expectations, and enjoy working at the school. As one member of staff wrote, 'We are a brilliant team with fantastic children and because of this children at Frant thrive.' Parents are extremely positive about the education their children receive and many praised the strong community feel of the school. One wrote, 'My children are very happy at Frant, which is a reflection of both the academic and pastoral care that they receive from all the staff. They are challenged, nurtured and given fantastic opportunities to enrich their educational life.'

Governors have very clear ambitions for the pupils. They want pupils to leave the school, 'being able to make good decisions; having achieved well academically; possessing a thirst for learning; having an enquiring mind; with a sense of community; and being well prepared for the next stage of their education at a much bigger school.' Under your leadership, the pupils are well on their way to achieving these ambitions.

You explained how you have changed the school culture to focus on pupils' learning. This starts with the children in early years who make a very good start to school life and enjoy learning both inside and outside. The youngest children talk confidently about their interests and ambitions for the future. Your team uses the impressive school building and grounds to support learning very well. As I walked through the shared atrium during the day, it was constantly filled with a buzz of learning, with pupils enthusiastically working on interesting activities.

Pupils who require additional help to catch up with their peers are supported very well. Pupils are happy and safe; they enjoy school and the different opportunities they are given. For example, pupils told me that they enjoy learning to swim and the wonderful choice of school dinners they have. The curriculum is enriched by visitors, and trips such as a recent one to a television news studio to help develop a journalistic writing style. Pupils work together well and I frequently saw them challenging and helping each other in class. One Year 5 girl kindly offered to show her friend, who had become stuck, how to solve a problem involving fractions.

At the time of the previous inspection, leaders were asked to improve the quality of teaching, especially in writing. Since your appointment, you have strengthened the expectations on teachers and checked the quality of teaching more regularly. As a result of your feedback, teaching is now consistently good. You have given clear guidance about the structure of lessons. This has generated a consistency of approach in every classroom that is leading to pupils making good progress over time. In recent years, pupils have not made enough progress in writing through key stage 2. This was still the case in the 2016 national assessments, so pupils did not reach the new, higher standards. Since September, you have taken decisive action to address this, including by providing training to staff. Current pupils are making good progress in writing.

You have worked hard to improve attendance. Despite this, you acknowledge that overall attendance is not yet good enough and there is more work to be done. When we visited classrooms, we saw the majority of pupils making good progress in mathematics and writing. However, we agreed that there were times when some pupils, including the most able, could be moved on to harder work sooner. Teachers are not yet all confident enough to change activities in lessons when pupils are doing better than they expected and are capable of achieving even more. You have found worthwhile opportunities for teachers to develop their roles as subject leaders. They are now carrying out a range of monitoring activities and working with their colleagues across the federation to share expertise. However, in the subjects that teachers lead, they are not yet having a decisive enough impact on improving standards, beyond their own classes.

Safeguarding is effective.

The leadership team has ensured that all safeguarding arrangements are fit for purpose and records are detailed and of high quality. This is particularly true in documentation relating to recruitment checks on staff, and in case notes about the most vulnerable pupils. School leaders have benefited from the very effective support and challenge they have received from the local authority safeguarding team. As a result, school procedures are extremely rigorous.

You provide staff, governors and volunteers with regular, up-to-date training to help them keep pupils safe. Together with the other safeguarding leaders, you work well with families and other agencies to keep pupils safe and happy.

You, and your governing body, are aware of the greatest risks to your pupils. For example, you have provided pupils with lessons about online safety and shared information to help parents keep their children safe online.

Inspection findings

- During this inspection, I focused on: the actions leaders are taking to improve attendance; the impact that leaders have had on improving teaching across the curriculum; the progress current pupils, particularly girls, are making in writing; the progress made by pupils who have special educational needs and/or disabilities; and the progress of a group of pupils who had fallen behind in reading.
- You have taken stringent action in an attempt to improve attendance, including meeting with parents when their child's attendance has been poor. As a result of your actions, the proportion of pupils who are persistently absent has fallen. However, overall rates of attendance are still not high enough.
- Leadership has been strengthened since the school became part of the Saxonbury Federation. Both of you have contributed positively to this. The role of executive headteacher has brought additional rigour, challenge and strategic oversight. As well, the new head of school has given the community confidence that someone, knowing them and the school well, will achieve the best for pupils. Governors are well skilled, and have high expectations and a clear vision for the future success of the school.
- You have instilled a culture of continuous improvement among the teaching staff. They recognise how the consistent approach to teaching mathematics and writing is leading to improved rates of progress. You make effective use of the federation to share work and expertise between colleagues and to check that teachers' assessments are accurate. This cross-school collaboration will be helpful as you now set about raising standards across the whole curriculum.

- Teachers' assessments show that both boys and girls are currently making good progress in writing. Some of the most able writers in the present Year 6 are on track to reach the higher standard this year. Pupils write for a variety of purposes and understand how to improve their writing. Older pupils are becoming increasingly skilled at editing and improving their own writing. Writing that I looked at in pupils' books confirmed that pupils throughout the school are now making good progress. They are developing lively ideas and vocabulary and extending their understanding of grammar and accuracy with spelling. Pupils take pride in their work and present it neatly.
- In the past, pupils who have special educational needs and/or disabilities have not made enough progress through key stage 2. The school's systems to track progress do not allow governors to see how some of these pupils with very low starting points are making small steps of progress. The leader responsible for provision for pupils who have special educational needs and/or disabilities knows the pupils and their families well. Teachers and teaching assistants work very well with current pupils who have special educational needs and/or disabilities to enable them to take an active part in lessons and make good progress whatever their starting points. Specialist interventions for these pupils are used effectively and reviewed regularly.
- You took decisive action to improve teaching in key stage 1. Pupils who did not meet the phonics standard in Year 1 are currently making good progress in developing their reading skills. The excellent reading resources and attractive library encourage pupils to read. The most able Year 2 pupils I met were confident readers and could explain how you read a poem differently from reading a story. Nevertheless, some of the books they are reading at present are not challenging enough.

Next steps for the school

Leaders and those responsible for governance should ensure that:

- teachers consistently monitor pupils' learning in lessons to move them on to more challenging work quickly to accelerate their progress over time
- teachers responsible for different subjects have more opportunities to improve standards in their curriculum areas across the school and federation
- they continue their drive to improve attendance by all groups of pupils.

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

Yours sincerely

Lee Selby
Her Majesty's Inspector

Information about the inspection

I met with both of you to discuss your evaluation of the school's effectiveness. We visited each class together during two learning walks. When visiting classrooms, I talked to pupils about their work and looked at their books. I met with a group of teachers to look at a range of pupils' work across different subjects. I worked with the leader responsible for pupils who have special educational needs and/or disabilities to evaluate the provision for these pupils. I met with nine governors, including the chair of the governing body. I held two telephone conversations with representatives of the local authority. I heard some pupils from Year 2 read. I spoke to parents before school and considered 42 responses to the online Parent View questionnaire. I also considered 13 confidential staff questionnaires and 32 responses to the pupil survey. I scrutinised a range of school documentation, including information about attendance and safeguarding.