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Mr Carey
Headteacher
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Dear Mr Carey

Short inspection of Saint George's Church of England School

Following my visit to the school on 21 February 2017 with Nick Cross, Ofsted Inspector, 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 Saint George's School was judged to be good in May 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 lead with clarity, warmth and passion. Consequently, you and other leaders, including governors, have successfully built on the strengths of the school since the previous inspection. You and other leaders make good use of performance information and the views of pupils, staff and parents when evaluating the effectiveness of provision. As a result, you have an accurate view of the school's performance and use this effectively when planning further developments. This is leading to greater consistency in the quality of teaching and improving pupils' outcomes.

Staff fully appreciate and engage with the training and professional development you and other leaders ensure are on offer. This training has led to a well-informed understanding of the methods and the high expectations of teaching practice that you expect. Classrooms have a purposeful and productive atmosphere where pupils can share their targets and talk about their learning confidently. The consistent use of time allocated for pupils to reflect and improve work is used well and greatly appreciated by pupils, who feel that this advances their progress. You have successfully tackled this area for improvement from the last inspection.

Pupils are happy, confident and participate in lessons enthusiastically. They respect their teachers and one another. Pupils' conduct is a strength. Rare instances of poor behaviour are dealt with swiftly and in line with the school's policy. The very large

majority of parents are delighted with the quality of education provided and the caring and inclusive culture that you and your staff have enhanced over time. An overwhelming majority of parents and staff believe that the school is well led and managed. You have successfully improved the school buildings so that the environment is comfortable, safe and secure for learning. Improved learning spaces now include, for example, a new science building.

When the school was previously inspected, you were asked to focus on increasing the proportion of students who make outstanding progress. You and the leadership team have built an accurate system for checking how well each pupil is doing. You have also improved the consistency of teaching by implementing robust systems for checking quality across subjects. You share this information openly with governors so that they can see the relative performance of pupils and groups of pupils and provide timely challenge to leaders. Teachers regularly update this information and successfully use it to ensure that pupils do not fall too far behind by planning bespoke additional support where it is needed.

Across all year groups, many pupils have entered the school with attainment significantly below the national average for Year 7. Pupils' progress is improving and accurate school data indicates that support for pupils is having a substantial impact on their progress. Nevertheless, you recognise that a minority of some particular groups of pupils still do not achieve as well as they could. For example, a small minority of disadvantaged pupils have historically made weaker progress than others nationally. The leader in charge of the sixth form rightly recognises that consistency in achievement across the range of subjects needs to improve still further, although outcomes are improving yearly.

Overall, pupils' attendance continues to improve and was better than the national average for secondary schools last year. Nevertheless, you are aware of above-average absence for some groups of pupils, because of the improvements made to the whole-school systems for tracking progress that you have introduced. Despite your implementation of effective strategies, attendance for some groups has not improved as quickly as you would like, particularly the disadvantaged pupils.

Safeguarding is effective.

You and your leadership team have ensured that all safeguarding arrangements are fit for purpose. All records are of high quality and appropriately detailed. Checks undertaken on the suitability of staff and volunteers are thorough and updated regularly. You, governors and other school leaders keep your own safeguarding knowledge up to date by attending effective training. You make sure that all staff and governors access training that will support their roles appropriately.

Those responsible for safeguarding work well with the local authority and other external agencies. Effective communication has ensured that timely and appropriate referrals are made and that school systems are robust. Pupils know who their 'go to' staff are, and can refer quickly to what they have been taught about personal safety when making decisions.

Inspection findings

- The leadership team have introduced effective mentoring programmes to support the progress of the most able pupils. Leaders have also introduced a varied enrichment programme to celebrate successes and raise aspirations. They are using an improved system for tracking pupils' attainment in an exemplary manner. This empowers school staff to see how well pupils are doing and to measure their progress. Current school data and historical data show that a small minority of the most able pupils have not performed as well as most-able pupils nationally. Detailed monitoring of teaching and learning has focused on the levels of challenge for the most able pupils. Effective support for staff is improving practice, particularly leaders' coaching to share good practice. Leaders have put in place measures to improve outcomes in languages and pupils' progress is improving as a result.
- Recent leadership changes have focused on the progress of disadvantaged pupils. However, differences in the achievement of disadvantaged pupils compared with other pupils nationally have not diminished rapidly enough. The school has robust strategies in place to improve this. For example, early interventions have been successful because staff recognise the emerging needs of their disadvantaged pupils and so identified strategies are better tailored to make a difference. Nevertheless, leaders are yet to monitor these strategies and interventions to be fully aware of their impact.
- Pupils appreciate the consistent use of the school assessment policy across the school, including in the sixth form. Pupils are increasingly able to think, act and pursue their studies independently. In lessons, pupils show a good attitude towards their learning and effective questioning from staff prompts deeper engagement and progress. Leaders and governors acknowledge that the performance across a range of subjects for a small minority of disadvantaged pupils varies considerably. Actions taken to improve teaching, learning and leadership indicate improving rates of progress for this group, with a reduction in the differences in outcomes between subjects.
- In the sixth form, leaders have established robust systems of self-evaluation that clearly identify weaknesses in and variations between subjects. Leaders have made good use of effective local school partnerships to inform accurate assessment practices and the sharing of good practice. Leaders keep a close eye on the strategies chosen to decrease the differences between subjects.

Next steps for the school

Leaders and those responsible for governance should ensure that:

- leaders intensify efforts to improve outcomes in the sixth form and closely monitor the impact they have so that variations in rates of progress between subjects are reduced
- disadvantaged pupils' attendance and progress improve until they are in line with others nationally

- the most able pupils regularly make the rapid progress of which they are capable.

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

Gerard Strong
Ofsted Inspector

Information about the inspection

Inspectors met with school leaders, other staff, governors and pupils. They visited lessons with senior leaders, talking to pupils and scrutinising their work. They also observed pupils' behaviour in and out of the classroom. Inspectors scrutinised a wide range of school documentation including leaders' self-evaluation of the school's performance, development planning, the school's policies and procedures, and attendance and behaviour tracking information. Inspectors also considered the views of 132 parents who responded to Parent View, Ofsted's online survey. Inspectors also took account of the 60 responses made to the staff survey.