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9 June 2017

Mrs Elizabeth Avard  
Executive Headteacher  
Salehurst Church of England Primary School  
George Hill  
Robertsbridge  
East Sussex  
TN32 5BU

Dear Mrs Avard

### **Short inspection of Salehurst Church of England Primary School**

Following my visit to the school on 9 May 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 December 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 as executive headteacher in September 2016, you have focused firmly on improving the school. Senior leaders reflect your ambition for the school to do well and they have worked hard, particularly to develop effective new approaches to the teaching of phonics, spelling and mathematics. These are improving pupils' progress in these areas. You have quickly gained the trust of staff who value the teamwork you encourage. They are proud to work at the school and want the best for the pupils.

You know this small, village school well and understand well the community it serves. Parents are positive about both your appointment and your approachability. Parents who responded to Ofsted's online questionnaire, Parent View, recognise that you have managed staff changes smoothly over the past 12 months. The comment of one parent summed up the views of parents more widely, saying they are 'pleased with the new team and how the school is run'. Parents are overwhelmingly positive about their children's happiness, safety and behaviour at school.

Pupils show polite and courteous behaviour routinely. They enjoy taking part in school council decision-making. A small minority of parents said that bullying is not dealt with well. However, pupils stated that teachers are good at resolving bullying if it happens. Well-maintained records show leaders respond quickly to any concerns. Although a range of sports and other clubs are available, some pupils say

they never go.

You have halted successfully a decline in pupil outcomes. As a result, standards are rising in reading, phonics, writing and mathematics. You have used expertise from other schools in the locality effectively, to check teachers' judgements about pupils' progress carefully. Your current assessment information shows pupils are making better progress now than at this point last year, although there is more to achieve to improve pupils' outcomes in phonics. Governors continue to be a strength, supporting and challenging leaders effectively. Insightful questioning and challenge is evident in records of governors' monitoring visits and meeting minutes.

At the time of the last inspection, inspectors asked you to increase the opportunity for pupils to write for sustained periods. You have ensured that pupils have regular opportunities to write, and this is reflected in pupils' English books. However, efforts to promote writing skills across the curriculum have not yet brought the same consistently high standards in other subjects. You were also asked to increase pupils' understanding and ability when using mathematical skills in real-life situations. You have introduced a relevant new approach to mathematics, which has a greater emphasis on developing pupils' reasoning skills, and you are rightly continuing to promote and develop this. Teachers were asked to use communication technology more effectively. The changes leaders have made in this area are contributing well to making lessons stimulating and interesting for pupils, and supporting pupils effectively to improve their writing. Inspectors also identified that the Reception class outside area required development. You have successfully remodelled this area completely, and during my visit pupils were experiencing valuable learning opportunities outside and inside the classroom. You are rightly keen to develop this area further so that the benefits of these improvements are maximised.

### **Safeguarding is effective.**

Following a careful audit and review of safety, you have taken effective action to ensure that all safeguarding arrangements are compliant. You have acted readily upon advice and put into place additional safety measures, including a new 'keep safe' procedure. Consequently, pupils know exactly what to do in an emergency. They feel safe in school and are confident that they have an adult they can talk to if they have any concerns.

Records are appropriately detailed and of a high quality, including checks on staff. Staff receive regular and helpful safeguarding training. They follow procedures carefully and know how to keep children safe. Governors monitor this area of leaders' work termly, reporting their findings to the full governing body. Although overall attendance is average, a few pupils continue to miss school more regularly than they should despite the persistent advice and assistance you maintain.

### **Inspection findings**

- Pupils who have special educational needs and/or disabilities are making

accelerated progress in reading, writing and mathematics. High-quality teaching and support ensures that they are catching up to their peers. Disadvantaged pupils receive effective individualised support. Consequently, this group of pupils is achieving well and many disadvantaged pupils are working beyond the standards expected for their ages. Pupils are confident to share their work and proud of their progress.

- Children in the early years make expected progress in reading. They recognise and say their sounds well and the most able children use their phonic knowledge efficiently to write simple sentences independently. Leaders have developed the early years environment effectively, so that it provides useful opportunities for pupils to explore their thinking and deepen their learning, for example when writing in the vet's role play area. Sensibly, leaders are planning to utilise the 'bank' more, and give children better access to the 'growing area' to enable further enrichment of outside learning opportunities.
- Leaders have successfully developed the use of quality texts as a stimulus for improving writing throughout the school. Writing in pupils' books shows increasing progress over time, particularly in the use of rich vocabulary. However, some of these texts are not always interesting enough to hold boys' attention.
- An effective whole-school focus has led to pupils improving the quality of language, grammar and punctuation in their own work, and sometimes the work of others. Teachers provide helpful support both in pupils' books and on display in classrooms. Pupils actively use this advice and it contributes well to their good progress.
- Pupils have some opportunities to develop their writing skills in subjects other than English. However, their writing in these other areas is not consistently of the same high standard as in their English books. Pupils' spelling and presentation are not as consistent in other subjects because teachers do not consistently expect the same high standards.
- Pupils' achievement in phonics is improving, linked to the systematic phonics programme implemented by the early years/key stage 1 leader, together with helpful training for staff. Teachers and teaching assistants demonstrate good subject knowledge and their pronunciation is helpfully clear and precise. However, at times, the phonics activities provided in lessons are too easy or too hard for some children.
- Progress in reading is good across the school. Pupils are enthusiastic readers who demonstrate effective skills, becoming fluent and confident readers.

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

Leaders and those responsible for governance should ensure that:

- pupils' writing across the curriculum reflects the same high standards of spelling and presentation as work in pupils' English books
- activities provided for pupils in phonics lessons are well matched to the needs of pupils with differing abilities.

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

Lesley Corbett  
**Ofsted Inspector**

### **Information about the inspection**

I met with you, your head of school, the special educational needs leader, the early years/key stage 1 leader, the senior teacher who leads English, the school's business manager, two governors and a group of pupils. I also met a representative from the local authority. I visited classes across the school with you to observe teaching and learning. I also considered responses to Ofsted's staff questionnaire, and 44 responses to Ofsted's online questionnaire, Parent View. I took into account 22 responses to Ofsted's parent free-text service and 20 responses to the pupil questionnaire. I analysed a range of documentation including the school improvement plan, minutes of governing body meetings, the school's single central record of checks on staff, and safeguarding policies and procedures.