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Mrs Caroline Bromley
Headteacher
Lamberhurst St Mary's CofE (Voluntary Controlled) Primary School
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Dear Mrs Bromley

Short inspection of Lamberhurst St Mary's CofE (Voluntary Controlled) Primary School

Following my visit to the school on 4 July 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 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 provide the school with purposeful, effective leadership. You have successfully established a clear, embedded vision of high expectations and continual improvement. You, the governors and staff work together as a strong, cohesive team. You are planning effectively for the school's joining of a multi-academy trust.

Able supported by your deputy headteacher, you have worked quickly and effectively to ensure that all leaders work together well to meet the needs of the school as it expands. As one parent said, 'New pupils are made to feel very welcome; they are well looked after and the existing pupils are kind and welcoming too.'

There is a wonderful atmosphere in the school. You and your staff go the extra mile to make sure that school is not only about learning during lesson time. You provide a wide range of clubs which make school exciting and fun. Older pupils said that they greatly enjoyed a recent residential visit where they learned new skills such as skiing.

Staff confirm that you encourage, challenge and support them to improve

continually. They are very positive about your leadership and feel that the school has improved since the previous inspection. They are proud to be members of the staff team. This reflects your relentless commitment to ensuring that everyone, adults and pupils alike, are helped and encouraged to achieve their very best. Pupils are happy, confident, achieving well, and also have great pride in their school. Parents concur with this view.

Regardless of their starting points and needs, you and the staff have high aspirations for all pupils and share these with them. Other leaders and governors share your passion and vision. During the open day held on the day of the inspection, many pupils shared their enjoyment about their learning with their parents. One pupil commented, 'I love trying new things and going to new places – it makes me feel excited about what I am doing.'

You have worked effectively to implement the revised national curriculum while ensuring that individual pupils' needs are met. Leaders and staff keep a close eye on the progress of each pupil. You are not complacent and constantly review the way that you use assessment information to best secure better outcomes for pupils, including challenging the most able. Pupils' progress is now assessed precisely, and if any pupils are not making fast enough progress, leaders address this promptly. Teachers are working together well to develop relevant systems to assess and record pupils' progress in subjects beyond English and mathematics.

You ensure that the quality of teaching and the curriculum are strengths. These contribute significantly to pupils' success in applying their reading, writing and mathematical skills confidently. Pupils benefit from taking part in a good range of curriculum and extra-curricular opportunities. As a result, they leave school as positive, self-assured young people, ready for the next stage of their learning. They are able to reflect on their views on school life and what is working well and what is not. However, leaders and governors do not yet seek pupils' views systematically, as part of their evaluation of the school's work.

You have worked effectively on the recommended areas for improvement identified at the previous inspection. Teaching is consistently good or better over time. Teachers provide pupils with exciting stimulus and greater challenge in their writing to enable them to make better progress from their starting points.

Safeguarding is effective.

You and the governing body ensure that there is a strong culture of safeguarding in the school. Together with the school business manager, you make sure that all checks on the suitability of adults to work with children are completed meticulously. Staff receive up-to-date training, including how to identify any form of abuse or whether any pupils are at risk of radicalisation and extremism. All policies reflect the latest statutory guidance and all staff follow these unfailingly. They understand their responsibility for the safety of pupils and follow procedures precisely. For example, a recent trip to London was planned with appropriate care and attention. You draw upon the support of external agencies in a timely manner when and

where needed. This supports you effectively in your role as designated safeguarding lead, and ensures that all pupils are well looked after and safe. Pupils are taught well how to stay safe, including when they learn about internet safety. As a result, pupils are confident in knowing how to respond and whom to speak to if they need help or are worried about something.

Inspection findings

- During this inspection, we looked closely at specific aspects of the school's provision. These included the effectiveness of safeguarding arrangements; pupils' achievement in writing; the teaching of mathematics and science; and how well leaders have ensured that the school supports pupils who have special educational needs and/or disabilities to make good progress.
 - Leaders have accurately identified how the school can improve still further. They ensure that all staff have clear responsibilities and understand their roles and accountability for pupils' progress. The restructuring of teaching teams has enabled teachers to build on their success and work rapidly on areas identified by leaders as benefiting from further improvement. This is already having a positive impact on pupils' progress, particularly for the most able girls in mathematics.
 - As part of the inspection focus on safeguarding, we reviewed the attendance of pupils who have special educational needs and/or disabilities. Historically, these pupils have attended school less frequently than other pupils. Leaders are taking effective action to continue to improve these pupils' attendance.
 - Leaders ensure that well-planned teaching and learning support all pupils who have special educational needs and/or disabilities to make good progress. Consequently, these pupils make consistently good progress from their starting points.
 - Leaders' effective monitoring has continued to improve the quality of teaching, learning and assessment. For example, the advice and guidance teachers give to pupils about how to improve their work now meet the standard set by leaders. As a result, pupils use this guidance well to improve their work and develop their understanding, especially in their writing across the curriculum.
 - In 2016, achievement in key stage 1 and key stage 2 was above the national average for pupils of the same age. Leaders' assessment information for 2017 indicates that this remains the case for current pupils. All pupils, particularly those who enter the school with low prior attainment, make at least good progress.
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- Leaders have worked relentlessly on the areas for improvement from the previous inspection. Current pupils' writing, and the school's progress

information, indicate that writing is becoming a strength. In each key stage, children practise writing in many different contexts throughout the curriculum. In science, Year 6 pupils wrote an explanation about the effects of air resistance and friction, and Year 3 pupils wrote high-quality reports on their visit to the Bank of England. One pupil wrote, 'The first thing we found was gold, not fake gold, real gold.'

- School assessment information shows that while progress for both boys and girls in writing is good most of the time, it is more uneven than in reading or mathematics. We agreed that pupils could take more care with their writing to avoid making careless mistakes in spelling.
- The experienced governing body has a secure knowledge and understanding of the school's priorities, resulting from governors' designated roles to monitor specific aspects of the school's work. Governors are also well informed about pupils' achievement. However, leaders and governors do not yet routinely gather the views of pupils or take these into account in their strategic improvement plans.
- The majority of parents and carers are very positive about their children's experiences in the school; the school offers them many valuable opportunities to come into school. Some parents told inspectors that they are keen to contribute still further and become more knowledgeable about the curriculum and how pupils' progress is assessed. Some parents would also value more advice on how to help their children's learning at home.

Next steps for the school

Leaders and those responsible for governance should ensure that:

- pupils continue to improve their writing, particularly the accuracy of their spelling
- leaders and governors further strengthen their monitoring and evaluation of the school's work, by taking into account the views of pupils
- existing positive partnerships with parents are strengthened further by giving parents more information about the curriculum and pupils' assessment and how they can support their children at home.

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

Jo Lakey
Ofsted Inspector

Information about the inspection

I met with you, other leaders and five members of the governing body, including a parent governor and the acting chair. I met with members of staff responsible for safeguarding. We visited classes together to see pupils learning, paying particular attention to the quality of teaching in English and mathematics. I spoke with pupils in lessons, and met pupils from key stage 2 to gather their views about the school and to look at their work with them. I also looked at pupils' writing, mathematics, science and topic books. I took account of the 86 responses to Ofsted's online questionnaire, Parent View, and parents' associated free-text comments. I met with parents at the start of the school day and throughout the open day. I analysed a range of the school's documentation, including information about school improvement and pupils' achievement, safeguarding checks, and policies and procedures. I also reviewed the leaders' evaluation of the school's effectiveness.