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Mrs Julie Burton
Headteacher
Bidborough Church of England Voluntary Controlled Primary School
Spring Lane
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Dear Mrs Burton

Short inspection of Bidborough Church of England Voluntary Controlled Primary School

Following my visit to the school on 5 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 July 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 are well supported by governors and staff. They share your vision and determination that pupils at Bidborough receive the best possible education. Leaders' total commitment to nurturing pupils is embedded in your school's Christian ethos, which recognises and celebrates each pupil's uniqueness.

Staff encourage pupils to be thoughtful and kind citizens who make a valuable contribution to their community within and beyond school. A group of pupils described your link school in Tanzania and the fundraising activities organised to support learning at that school. One pupil confirmed how positive others are about this link by saying, 'It makes us grateful for the things that we have and not to take possessions and food for granted.'

You have nurtured a calm and purposeful environment for learning, characterised by caring relationships between pupils and staff. Teachers' high-quality guidance helps pupils to develop into articulate and happy learners. Pupils' enjoyment of their learning is tangible. They are keen to share their views and listen respectfully to each other's ideas.

You have acted on the recommendations from the previous inspection to improve

teaching by ensuring that pupils know what their targets are and how to take the next steps in their learning. The introduction of your school's approach called 'target time' has given pupils secure ownership of their targets. Targets are also shared helpfully with parents.

Leaders were also asked to improve pupils' progress in writing, particularly for middle-attaining pupils. You have adopted a whole-school approach to the teaching of writing. Teachers' careful planning ensures that pupils are very clear about what they are learning. All pupils produce high-quality writing and have a good level of skill in grammar, punctuation and spelling. Pupils' work shows that progress in writing across the school is consistently good, whatever pupils' attainment on entry. However, the most able pupils do not write at greater depth often enough.

The vast majority of parents who responded to Parent View, Ofsted's online survey, were very complimentary about the school and would recommend it to others. Parents have much confidence in the work of the leadership team and how its members shape the school's effectiveness.

Safeguarding is effective.

The leadership team has ensured that all safeguarding arrangements are fit for purpose and records are detailed and of good quality. Staff receive training on the latest requirements for safeguarding, enabling them to be clear about when and how to report any concerns they have about pupils. Recruitment and vetting procedures for the appointment of new staff follow statutory guidance carefully. When needed, leaders and staff work well with professionals outside the school to support pupils and their needs.

Pupils confirm that they feel safe in school and that they are well prepared to face potential risks in society; for example, by learning about internet safety. All parents who responded to their questionnaire confirm that their child feels safe at school.

Inspection findings

- During this inspection, we looked closely at specific aspects of the school's provision including pupils' attendance levels, particularly for disadvantaged pupils and for those who have special educational needs and/or disabilities. Most pupils now attend regularly and are seldom late for school. Leaders have worked with pupils and parents to raise the profile of the benefits of regular attendance. Consequently, attendance rates have improved over the past year and are above average for all groups.
- Together we also focused on pupils' achievement in writing, particularly for boys who are working at greater depth. Leaders have raised teachers' expectations of the quality of pupils' writing and provided effective training to improve standards of teaching and learning. Staff meet regularly to discuss and assess pupils' work. Partnerships with local schools are helping teachers to assess the standard of pupils' work with accuracy. As a result, teachers are clear about what they need

to teach and how to engage pupils, including boys, so that all pupils develop a high standard in a range of writing styles. Consequently, boys' achievement is in line with that of the girls. However, sometimes pupils spend too much time recapping knowledge that they already know before they are able to tackle something more challenging.

- Displays around the school and writing in books reflect leaders' and teachers' high expectations. Pupils are keen to do their best and are proud of their work. Handwriting and presentation are of a high standard, including in other subjects. Although the proportion of pupils achieving the expected standard in writing at the end of both key stages 1 and 2 has risen, not enough pupils are working at a greater depth.
- Children in the early years get off to a good start. The proportion reaching a good level of development is consistently above that seen nationally. Activities are organised effectively with a good balance between work led by staff and that chosen by children. For example, teachers modified activities in order to let children explore their interest in monsters, including a monster café and model making. Staff plan work to challenge children at different stages in their learning. Children thoroughly enjoy activities and learn well.
- A small proportion of pupils are disadvantaged or have special educational needs and/or disabilities. The provision for these pupils is effective, with a thorough system for identifying and responding to their needs. The special educational needs coordinator has wisely introduced a system for carefully tracking the impact of any interventions put into place.
- Another focus of the inspection was the quality of the school's curriculum. It is broad and well developed, ensuring that pupils learn effectively about a range of subjects. Religious education is a particular strength of the school. The curriculum prepares pupils well for life in 21st century Britain.
- Governors know the school well. They make effective use of their skills and expertise to support your drive for improvement. Regular training and access to detailed assessment information ensure that governors ask increasingly incisive questions about the performance of different groups of pupils. There is an effective partnership between senior leaders and governors that does not compromise the high expectations of leaders' work. The school has recently introduced a new website, which governors and leaders know they must check to ensure that it meets statutory requirements.

Next steps for the school

Leaders and those responsible for governance should:

- raise standards in writing for the most able pupils, so that more achieve at greater depth.

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

Marcia Goodwin
Ofsted Inspector

Information about the inspection

During this inspection I met with you, the deputy headteacher, the English leader and the special educational needs coordinator to discuss the school's effectiveness. I also met with governors and a representative of the local authority. I held a telephone conversation with a representative of the diocese. I met with a group of pupils and talked with others around the school and during lessons. You accompanied me on a tour of the school. Along with the deputy headteacher, I observed teaching and learning in six classes across the school. I scrutinised a sample of pupils' books. I examined documents, including the school's information about safeguarding pupils, the school's evaluation of its work and its development plans. I considered 63 responses to Parent View. Fourteen responses to Ofsted's survey for members of staff were also considered along with 50 responses to the pupil survey.