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Mrs Alison Saunders  
Headteacher  
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Dear Mrs Saunders

### **Short inspection of St Lawrence Church of England Primary School**

Following my visit to the school on 20 September 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 January 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 have continued to develop and embed an inclusive and exciting vision of education. You have a clear idea about what pupils who attend St Lawrence should experience and the love and care they should receive. Every pupil is known as an individual and every member of staff is treated like a member of the family. Consequently, staff are proud of their school and enjoy working there. Parents are very positive about the education their children receive. As one parent wrote: 'The variety of learning... and the freedom to run, learn and play is a perfect combination.' Other parents talk enthusiastically about the school's family ethos and strong Christian distinctiveness that was recognised in the recent outstanding Statutory Inspection of Anglican and Methodist Schools.

Pupils enjoy a wide range of exciting opportunities that help them develop into confident, well-rounded, resilient and ambitious individuals. Pupils have no well-founded concerns about poor behaviour or bullying and know that there is always someone available to talk to. Older pupils enjoy the opportunities to take on responsibilities as buddies to younger peers, as prefects, or as members of the school council. Together with the staff, you have highlighted 50 interesting things that pupils should do before they leave St Lawrence. These make the most of the school's woodland setting and range from building a den to painting the fence with blackberries and from delivering a reading in church to reciting poetry. Attendance

is high because pupils do not want to miss the next exciting experience or adventure. Although there are many strengths to celebrate, you and your team recognise that there is more work to do to strengthen provision for pupils in some areas of the curriculum.

At the time of the previous inspection you were asked to improve teaching by ensuring that time was used wisely and children knew their targets. Since that time, nearly five years ago, much has changed in the school and in education nationally. In an effort to improve teaching across the school you have made recent appointments to strengthen the school leadership team. While teaching is good throughout the school, leaders realise that appraisal needs to be used to develop the skills of some staff, including some teaching assistants, further.

We agreed that the school's small cohorts mean it is difficult to make comparisons about pupils' outcomes over time. However, standards are rising at the end of key stage 2, especially in reading and mathematics. Writing is lagging behind, but you and other leaders are addressing this. You track closely the progress of individuals and groups, and share this information with governors. However, you recognise that the assessment information collected by teachers could be better used to help plan challenging tasks for all groups of pupils, especially the most able. Governors are very aware of how well pupils are progressing, including those who are disadvantaged or those who have special educational needs and/or disabilities.

### **Safeguarding is effective.**

Governors and leaders have ensured that all safeguarding arrangements are fit for purpose. Staff and governors are well trained and understand their statutory responsibilities.

Appropriate risk assessments are carried out by leaders to ensure that the school's unique site can be used safely all year round. Leaders are aware of the greatest risks faced by their pupils, including those relating to online safety. Leaders take appropriate steps to help protect pupils from these risks.

In recent years, there have been very few cases of pupils requiring additional support or protection from children's services. However, leaders recognise that they cannot be complacent and know the processes to follow should they have any concerns.

### **Inspection findings**

- During this short inspection we agreed to focus on three key questions:
  - How well are current pupils progressing in writing?
  - How have leaders helped to improve teaching?
  - How well does the curriculum meet the needs of pupils in a wide range of subjects?
- In recent years, pupils have made slower progress in writing than in reading. You

rightly identified that pupils' spelling was often a barrier to them achieving well. Additional focused teaching of spelling was introduced during the last academic year and this has had a positive impact. This approach is now being adapted further and your team are now appropriately considering how to overcome barriers to higher achievement in writing. They recognise, for example, that to reach a greater depth standard the most able pupils need to use more complex sentence structures accurately.

- Pupils have opportunities to write for a range of purposes, including in other subjects such as history. Teachers diligently identify strengths and areas for development in pupils' writing so that pupils know how to improve their writing further. However, sometimes basic errors such as omitting capital letters and full stops are not corrected in key stage 1.
- Over the last year, leaders have successfully improved the teaching of mathematics. Pupils, including those who are disadvantaged, are making faster progress in mathematics. This is most notable in key stage 2. Successful teaching is characterised by the appropriate use of practical resources and by teachers using effective questioning and varying tasks to deepen pupils' thinking. For example, children in Reception were carefully ordering numbers using birthday cards and candles while older pupils demonstrated a deep understanding of how negative numbers operate.
- Where teaching is less strong, pupils, including the most able, are less engaged. Some teaching assistants do not have the skills to question pupils effectively or adapt their learning when needed. As a result, some pupils say their work is too easy.
- You have recently strengthened the leadership team with the appointment of an additional assistant headteacher. The whole new leadership team is already working together well and is honest and reflective about what needs to improve further. Plans are in place for leaders to work with colleagues to strengthen the quality of teaching further.
- Although detailed tracking of pupils' progress is in place, you have identified that more needs to be done to use assessment in an efficient and helpful way. You aim to identify an approach that will allow teachers to know exactly what their pupils need to learn next, without adding unnecessarily to teachers' workload.
- Parents are full of praise for the curriculum you provide. Identified strengths include the speed with which pupils learn to read, the exciting science in key stage 2 and the imaginative use of the locality, especially the woodland and church. Parents also appreciate the wide range of extra-curricular clubs that take place. Music is a real strength of the school, with a high proportion of pupils learning an instrument and being members of the school orchestra. The whole school sings together as a choir to a very high standard.
- Provision in some subjects including design technology and computing is not strong enough. More work needs to be done to ensure that teachers think about the knowledge, skills and understanding they want pupils to develop when they are planning themes and topics. You agreed that the school's forthcoming 150th anniversary will be a prime opportunity to use assessment information to help

plan exciting learning in a range of subjects.

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

Leaders and those responsible for governance should ensure that:

- they refine assessment systems so that teachers have a clear understanding of what pupils can do, and what they need to do next to develop their knowledge, skills and understanding in a wide range of subjects
- teaching challenges and inspires the most able consistently
- the curriculum in some subjects, including computing and design technology, is enhanced so that it fully meets the needs of pupils and prepares them well for the future
- support staff develop effective questioning skills to challenge pupils so that they make rapid progress.

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

Lee Selby  
**Her Majesty's Inspector**

### **Information about the inspection**

I met with the senior leadership team to discuss the school's self-evaluation and with the headteacher to discuss the school's safeguarding procedures. I carried out two learning walks with the headteacher and looked at a range of pupils' work with other leaders. I met with three members of the governing body and held a telephone conversation with a representative of the local authority. I spoke with some parents informally at the start of the day and attended the whole school worship. I talked to pupils in lessons and informally around the school. I looked at school documentation relating to governance, pupils' outcomes and safeguarding. I considered 23 responses to the online pupil survey, 12 responses to the staff survey and 29 responses to Parent View including 22 free-text comments.