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Mr Jonathan Elms
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Dear Mr Elms

Short inspection of Stonegate Church of England Primary School

Following my visit to the school on 10 October 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 October 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 joined the school in September 2016. The local authority had helpfully reviewed the school's effectiveness in July 2016. Their transition report is clear that the school had a number of areas to improve, including teaching and learning, assessment processes and aspects of safeguarding. Your highly effective leadership has brought about important improvements in a short space of time.

Parents and pupils value your leadership. Pupils enjoy school and recognise the 'fun' you bring to Stonegate. Every parent who spoke with me, wrote to me or took the time to add a free-text comment within the online questionnaire, Parent View, was glowing in their praise of the school. The comment of one parent that, 'this is a good school that is trying very hard to be even better and that is appreciated by this parent' reflects the sense of gratitude that many parents wanted to convey.

The governing body and the local authority admire your energy, drive and ambition for Stonegate. Governors are reflective and honest about the part they played in letting the quality of education to drift and decline between 2013 and 2016. Governors are now in a much stronger position to support and challenge your leadership. They value your openness and integrity. Governors have a good understanding of the many strengths in the school and know what can be even

better. For example, your accurate evaluation of the school and plans for improvement highlight that pupils in key stage 2 need to further develop their knowledge and skills in subjects such as science, history and geography.

At the time of the last inspection, leaders were asked to develop better systems to review pupils' progress. The local authority transition report in July 2016 highlighted this as a key weakness in the school. You have introduced an effective system for tracking the progress that groups of pupils make in English and mathematics. The school's progress information shows that pupils make good progress from the end of key stage 1 to the end of key stage 2. Work in pupils' books shows the strong progress that Year 6 pupils made last year. You have made greater use of teaching assistants, and they were effective in supporting those pupils who needed greater support to work at the expected standard by the end of the year. You recognise that you do not yet have enough assessment information about the progress that pupils are making in subjects other than English and mathematics.

Safeguarding is effective.

The leadership team has ensured that all safeguarding arrangements are fit for purpose. Leaders have created a culture where pupils' safety and well-being are given the highest priority. Leaders and staff with a named responsibility for keeping pupils safe keep detailed and clear records of all concerns regarding pupils. All communication, including with pupils and parents, is recorded and logged meticulously. Leaders work effectively with a wide range of partner agencies, including the local authority. Referrals to secure additional support for families are thorough and timely.

Pupils feel safe in school and are taught to keep safe, including when online. Older pupils are able to instantly recall key messages and complex concepts such as the 'digital footprint' they leave when using social media. Parents say they feel that pupils are safe in school. Parents and pupils value the improvements to the school site, such as the new gates and side fence. They say that these improvements make them feel even safer. Leaders' assessment of risk, including for trips to London, are robust. Planning is meticulous. As a result, all trips and visits pass without incident.

Inspection findings

- During this inspection I looked at: the improvements you have made to teaching and learning in key stage 2; the personal development and behaviour of pupils; the activities and experiences that enrich the curriculum; and the progress that pupils make in science, history and geography.
- You have improved the quality of teaching and learning in key stage 2. Teachers have had very effective support and challenge. You have provided good professional development for all staff and tailored coaching support for teachers when required. Your ambition for pupils is clear, and work in pupils' books over time shows that teachers now share your clarity of vision and your ambition for the success of the school. Pupils make good progress in mathematics and English

at key stage 2. You are developing effective systems for checking the progress of pupils in subjects other than English and mathematics.

- Stonegate is an oasis of calm. Pupils arrive at school happy and ready to learn. They settle very quickly in lessons. Behaviour around the school and in classrooms is very good. Pupils who join the school at different times during the year or key stage feel well supported and are happy at school. Pupils trust adults and are confident that they would share any concerns or problems they might have.
- Older pupils have a very positive impact on the calm and purposeful playgrounds at break and lunchtimes. Pupils who are 'playground friends' are well trained to deal with minor issues between pupils. They are proud to be given the additional responsibility, and other pupils know how they will help them. Pupils who are 'playground leaders' set up and manage a wide range of team games and sports. Many pupils join in and this creates a very positive atmosphere on the playground.
- The curriculum is broad and balanced. Leaders invest a lot of time and energy providing a wide range of enriching learning opportunities. Leaders value the work of the parent-teacher association and the funding that they raise. Pupils talk with relish about their trips to the Globe Theatre, the Royal Opera House and the Houses of Parliament. Parents value the trips that enhance the curriculum. The school's website provides a wealth of information about the curriculum and learning that has taken place. Pupils also value the wide range of extra-curricular and after-school clubs that the school provides. They take part in a wide range of sporting clubs and competitive sports. The school is proud of the performing arts experiences and productions it puts on. The vast majority of pupils are part of the ever-growing and popular choir.
- Children get a very good start at Stonegate. They access a broad and rich range of learning experiences. Children develop their natural curiosity about how things work and are well prepared for key stage 1. Pupils in key stage 1 make good progress in history and geography and very good progress in science. Teachers creatively link literacy work to other subjects, while systematically developing pupils' scientific understanding. For example, pupils get valuable opportunities to form hypotheses, carry out investigations and then record their findings.
- Key stage 2 pupils do not make the same levels of progress in science, history and geography. Last year, much of the planned learning in key stage 2 relating to history and geography was too focused on the development of pupils' English skills. As a result, pupils do not systematically develop their knowledge and skills in other subjects. Leaders know this and it is one of the planned areas for improvement. It is, however, too soon to see the impact of these plans.

Next steps for the school

Leaders and those responsible for governance should ensure that:

- planned learning in key stage 2 systematically develops pupils' knowledge and skills in subjects such as science, history and geography

- they have a clearer understanding about pupils' progress in subjects other than English and mathematics.

I am copying this letter to the chair of the governing body, the director of education for the Diocese of Chichester and the director of children's services for East Sussex. This letter will be published on the Ofsted website.

Yours sincerely

Mark Cole
Her Majesty's Inspector

Information about the inspection

I met with you and governors to review your evaluation of the school's effectiveness. I accompanied senior leaders to all three key stages. We evaluated a range of work in pupils' books, including the work of those that were in the school before you became headteacher. I spoke to a representative of the local authority and reviewed their reports. I spoke to pupils around the school and met two groups of older pupils over lunch. I scrutinised 39 responses to the online questionnaire, Parent View, and free-text comments. I met parents before school and received written communications. I checked the effectiveness of your safeguarding arrangements, including those related to recruitment.