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Mr Christopher Harrison
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Dear Mr Harrison

Short inspection of George Carey Church of England Primary School

Following my visit to the school on 21 November 2017 with Jonathan Newby, Ofsted Inspector, 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 2012.

This school continues to be good.

The leadership team has maintained the good quality of education in the school since the previous inspection. During that time, the number of pupils attending the school has doubled. You have used your knowledge and experience of the school and the local community to great effect during this expansion. With the school's governors, you have reviewed the roles and responsibilities of staff to respond to the increased demands of a larger school community. You have identified teachers who have leadership potential and have given them increased responsibility. Leaders have brought about greater consistency in practice within the school.

Together with your leadership team, you have a secure knowledge of the strengths and weaknesses of the school. You use assessment information, external evaluations and leaders' evaluations to drive further improvements. As the school has grown, you have maintained an environment for all children to learn.

Governors know the school well and are focused on continuing the improvement of recent years. They have reviewed their own skills to ensure that they have the expertise to hold leaders to account in all aspects of school life. Governors visit the school regularly, so they understand its strengths and weaknesses. Governors are ambitious for the school and are confident in asking the right questions about the information they receive from school leaders.

The impact of your work is seen in the improvements since the previous inspection. At the

end of key stage 2 in 2017, the proportion of pupils achieving the expected standard in reading, writing and mathematics was above the national averages. In reading, a greater proportion of children reached the higher standard than the national average. Although a lower proportion of pupils reached the higher standard in writing and mathematics, most pupils made good progress from their different starting points.

Pupils at the school are polite and well mannered. They are confident and happy to take part in life at the school. Pupils are given opportunities to contribute actively to the school through the 'Learning Ambassador' roles. All the pupils we spoke to were proud of their school. They were able to explain what they were learning. Around the school, they conduct themselves extremely well and respond to the positive school reward, 'Going for Gold'.

Safeguarding is effective.

Leaders have ensured that all safeguarding arrangements are fit for purpose. Records are detailed and of high quality. The designated safeguarding leader has received a wide range of training and has a thorough knowledge of how to keep the children safe. You ensure that the school's systems and procedures are continually reviewed and kept up to date, including training for staff and governors. The checks on the suitability of staff to work at the school are carried out with care and diligence. Staff raise any concerns promptly and leaders draw on advice from external agencies to safeguard vulnerable pupils. The safeguarding team is tenacious and systematic in following up referrals to social care. It provides advice and guidance to families on how to stay healthy and safe, and about emotional and mental health. You have included lessons in the curriculum to teach children to keep themselves safe. These include, for example, safety online, mental health and safety when crossing the roads. Governors are clear about their statutory responsibilities and the safeguarding governor regularly visits the school. Pupils I interviewed told me that they are very happy at school and they feel safe; the school teaches them to be safe and they know whom to go to if they are worried. Parents agree that their children are safe and well looked after in school.

Inspection findings

- The first area we agreed to explore during the inspection was pupils' progress in writing. In 2017, pupils' attainment in writing was below that in reading, and the proportion of disadvantaged pupils reaching the expected standard was lower than that of other pupils.
- You have identified writing as a priority for school improvement. Leaders have redesigned the curriculum to provide pupils with more opportunities for writing about interesting topics. In their study of the Second World War or Tudor Times, for example, there are opportunities for extended writing, and pupils write creatively in response to the work of artists. You have planned the curriculum so that teachers systematically teach pupils the technical writing skills they require.
- Effective teaching encourages pupils to talk about their writing and create exciting ideas; pupils are enthusiastic to share these with one another. For example, in a Year 4 class, pupils worked well together to draft their own alternative and often amusing

versions of the story of 'the three little pigs'.

- Pupils respond well to feedback from adults and are keen to improve their writing. Pupils are also given opportunities to self-correct their spelling of ambitious words and respond very positively to adults' high expectations. As a result, they choose words that give interest to their writing.
- Teachers encourage pupils to use more complex sentences to explain their meaning and a variety of adjectives to make their writing more vivid. They also make sure that they experience writing in a variety of styles, including stories, poems, letters and reports.
- These actions are raising pupils' attainment. The school's assessment information and work seen in books show that pupils are making improved progress in writing from their starting points. There are no marked differences in the attainment of disadvantaged and other pupils.
- The second area of focus for the inspection was to evaluate the impact of the school's actions to improve the teaching of the most able pupils in mathematics. In 2017, the proportion of the most able pupils at the end of key stage 2 who attained the higher standard in mathematics was in line with national averages.
- Leaders employed an external consultant to review the teaching of mathematics in early years and this has had an impact in raising the level of mathematical challenge offered to children. However, this challenge is not maintained throughout key stages 1 and 2. Teachers' questioning is still not used consistently well to challenge pupils to think more deeply about mathematics and use mathematical language to explain their reasoning.
- The revised curriculum has provided teachers with clear guidance for teaching mathematics. In the lessons we observed, the teaching of mathematical processes was systematic and pupils worked at the expected standard for their age. Pupils were able to explain their learning and show how to calculate the answer, although they were less clear about the application of their learning in other contexts. The most effective teaching involved identification and correction of misconceptions so that pupils quickly learned from their mistakes. While these improvements have contributed to a greater proportion of pupils reaching the higher standard in mathematics, this remains inconsistent across year groups, reflecting the uneven quality of teaching.
- Finally, we agreed to review how well leaders ensure that pupils who have special educational needs (SEN) and/or disabilities make strong progress. The proportion of pupils who have SEN and/or disabilities at the school is higher than the national average.
- School leaders are proud of the inclusion of all pupils at the school. You have appointed staff with specialist knowledge and understanding to lead the inclusion team. Leaders use assessment to identify pupils' individual needs and plan appropriate learning.
- In the specialist unit, we observed staff sharing information with parents at the start and end of the school day, so pupils have a calm transition between home and school. Pupils were engaged with individual learning that developed their resilience, confidence and interaction with other pupils. Pupils are safe and well cared for.
- You and your team use a range of teaching, including both small-group and individual

teaching to enable pupils to make rapid progress. Assessment information provided by the school shows that pupils who have SEN and/or disabilities make progress that is at least in line with that of other pupils, from their different starting points.

Next steps for the school

Leaders and those responsible for governance should ensure that:

- teachers consistently use tasks and questioning that deepen pupils' mathematical thinking so that the most able pupils make strong progress across key stages 1 and 2.

I am copying this letter to the chair of the governing body, the director of education for the Diocese of Chelmsford, the regional schools commissioner and the director of children's services for Barking and Dagenham. This letter will be published on the Ofsted website.

Yours sincerely

Simon Knowles
Ofsted Inspector

Information about the inspection

During the inspection, we met with you and other senior leaders, as well as four members of the governing body. I met with a representative from the local authority. Together with leaders, we visited lessons and reviewed work in pupils' books. I met with pupils and also spoke to pupils during lessons. I considered the 52 responses to Ofsted's online survey for parents. We reviewed a range of documents, including the school's self-evaluation and improvement plans and information about pupils' progress and attendance. Information related to safeguarding was also reviewed, including school records, policies and procedures, and the single central record of recruitment checks. I scrutinised the school's website and confirmed that it meets the requirements on the publication of specified information.