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Mrs Todd
Headteacher
Radwinter Church of England Voluntary Aided Primary School
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Dear Mrs Todd

Short inspection of Radwinter Church of England Voluntary Aided Primary School

Following my visit to the school on 25 January 2018, 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 took up post as interim headteacher in September 2017 and your appointment was made permanent this January. You have very quickly and accurately identified the strengths and weaknesses of the school. You have maintained the school's strong community and have the confidence of staff, parents and carers. This parent comment sums up the views of many: 'Mrs Todd has made the transition between headteachers smoothly and impresses us with her kind and caring manner.'

Pupils are happy and enjoy coming to school. They describe their school as being a safe, caring, friendly place where they can learn. One pupil who joined mid-year described the school as 'amazing' because it is welcoming and provides lots of after-school activities. Pupils told me that teachers make learning fun and help them when they find the work hard. Most pupils said they find the work challenging as it 'makes them think hard.' However, a few of the most able pupils said that at times they would like more challenging work. Looking at pupils' work we agreed this was still an area for development.

Your previous inspection report asked you to improve the quality of feedback given to pupils and to increase opportunities for teachers to share and improve their classroom skills. You have done both. Teachers follow the revised marking and assessment policy with a high degree of consistency and you closely monitor the

impact on pupils' progress. Pupils' work indicates improved progress as a result of the feedback they receive.

You have made effective use of the Uttlesford Partnership Consortium to improve teaching. Teachers have the opportunity to learn from teachers in other local schools as well as one another. I saw some imaginative teaching when we visited lessons. For example, when pupils were writing about their Arctic expedition the teacher replicated the sound landscape and sound of the wind using computer technology. Pupils told me it made them feel as if they were in the Arctic, making it easier to write about.

Behaviour in class and around the school is exemplary. Pupils work cooperatively in class and at playtime. Older pupils support the younger pupils. Year 6 pupils act as buddies to children in Reception. Buddies take their responsibility seriously and this helps the younger children quickly settle into school. Pupils have very positive attitudes towards their learning and take pride in their work and achievements. They concentrate on their work and are keen to ask questions and improve their work.

Pupils' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development is exceptionally well catered for. Pupils have the opportunity to study a range of cultures and beliefs through subjects other than religious education. The school's values are reinforced through positive relationships between all members of the school, resulting in a harmonious school community. Several parents commented on the family ethos of the school. Pupils have the opportunity to reflect on thought-provoking topics through the weekly 'big question'. These topics are very varied. For example, during my visit Years 5 and 6 were reflecting on what it might be like to be a refugee. They came up with some very interesting views. Pupils also have the opportunity to take part in a range of sporting activities, drama and music events and take on posts of responsibility such as house captain, school council, worship council and play leaders.

The provision for children in Reception remains strong. Children are set a range of learning activities that are closely matched to their learning needs. As a result children concentrate on their learning, follow instructions and work cooperatively with one another and adults. Children enjoy their learning and have positive attitudes towards school. I saw some good individualised work and progress in a selection of learning journals. The proportion of pupils reaching a good level of development is consistently at, or above, the national average.

Governors possess a range of skills and experience that allow them to effectively challenge and support school leaders. They understand the strengths and weaknesses of the school and carefully monitor the impact of the additional funding received for disadvantaged pupils and the sports funding on pupil outcomes.

Safeguarding is effective.

You ensure that staff are well informed about safeguarding procedures through annual training and updates throughout the year. Staff understand their responsibilities and what to do if they have any concerns. All the appropriate pre-employment safeguarding checks are carried out on all staff and volunteers before they are allowed to work with the pupils. The identity of visitors to the school is carefully checked and they are given information to read on safeguarding before they leave the reception area. You have ensured that policies meet the latest requirements and records are kept up to date and secure. Governors are trained in safeguarding and ensure that they fulfil their statutory duties.

Pupils, staff and the overwhelming majority of parents agreed that pupils are safe and well cared for in school. One parent commented: 'If there was a box better than "strongly agree" for how well the child is cared for, I would use it.' Pupils are taught how to keep themselves safe in a variety of situations such as on the road, fire safety and e-safety. Pupils told me that bullying was rare and if it occurs staff are very quick to deal with it. Pupils have confidence that staff will support them if they have any concerns.

Inspection findings

- To ascertain whether the school remains good, I focused on:
 - what leaders are doing to improve pupils' progress in writing, especially in key stage 2
 - whether teaching and feedback allows the most able pupils to deepen their knowledge and understanding in reading and writing
 - whether pupils are making good progress in subjects other than mathematics and English
 - whether outcomes in mathematics remain a strength.
- In 2017 the proportion of pupils achieving the expected level in the Year 6 statutory tests in reading, writing and mathematics was above average. However, pupil progress in writing declined significantly on previous years. Leaders have taken quick action to identify the factors that hindered pupils' progress and as a result made changes to how writing is taught. Early evidence suggests this is having a positive impact on outcomes. Work in pupils' books indicates pupils have made strong progress since the start of the year. Pupils' handwriting, spelling and punctuation as well as the content show marked improvement.
- School leaders systematically monitor the progress of pupils so that pupils who may be falling behind in their learning are provided with additional help. School progress information and pupils' work indicates that this is having a positive impact on improving writing and reading outcomes for these pupils.
- By the time they reach the end of Year 6 most-able pupils are meeting the expected standard in reading and writing and a higher than average percentage reach the higher standard. However, their progress in reading and writing is no

better than average. This is an area you quickly identified and your analysis of previous pupils' performance indicates that, in reading, all pupils 'failed to read between the lines' and found some of the vocabulary difficult to understand. In writing pupils were not using a wide enough range of vocabulary or developing their work sufficiently to reach the higher standard.

- The most able pupils are benefiting from the changes you have introduced in writing. When we visited the classroom teachers were asking the most able pupils more probing questions and providing very precise feedback so they were able to extend their work. We looked at some good-quality poetry writing by Year 5 and 6 pupils. Their poems used some sophisticated vocabulary to create imagery and emotion.
- You have placed a lot of emphasis on reading and the pupils I spoke to all said how much they enjoy reading. Pupils read quality books that are suitable for their age. In guided reading lessons pupils are asked more 'why' and 'what' questions to develop their skills of inference. Talking to some of the most able pupils and looking at their work indicates that their skills of inference are improving. All pupils are benefiting as staff place more emphasis on this type of questioning.
- Pupils follow a broad curriculum and have the opportunity to study a range of subjects through interesting topics. I saw some excellent artwork adorning the walls in classrooms. Looking at the work in pupils' topic and science books I found pupils have good opportunities to develop their reading and writing skills in these subjects. In key stage 2 pupils are also provided with work which is able to develop their historical, geographical and religious knowledge. However, in key stage 1 the emphasis was often on the English content of the work rather than the subject content. We agreed that this curriculum approach may not be supporting good progress for younger pupils in a range of subjects.
- Pupils are making adequate progress in science and they complete a lot of work. However, very little work is designed to allow them to develop their scientific investigation skills or to evaluate their findings. This is limiting pupils' progress in science. We agreed this was an area for development.
- Finally, I looked at the quality of teaching and learning in mathematics. For three consecutive years pupils' progress in mathematics has been above average. Visits to lessons and pupils' work show that it continues to be a strength of the school. Pupils enjoy mathematics because they are given interesting work that challenges their thinking. For example, Year 2 were learning how to calculate change. This was relevant as they were running a cake stall the following day.
- Teachers monitor pupils work closely but at times they are not ensuring the most able pupils are completing the most demanding work.

Next steps for the school

Leaders and those responsible for governance should ensure that:

- work is suitably challenging for the most able pupils so more attain the higher standards in English and mathematics

- the key stage 1 curriculum is reviewed to enable pupils to make better progress in humanities subjects
- science teaching across the school is developed so that pupils are provided with greater opportunity to conduct investigations in order to improve their inquiry and evaluative skills.

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 Essex. This letter will be published on the Ofsted website.

Yours sincerely

Caroline Pardy
Ofsted Inspector

Information about the inspection

I met with you, the teacher responsible for literacy and the Year 5 and 6 teacher. I held a meeting with three governors, including the chair of governors. You and I observed learning taking place in all classes and also looked at a selection of pupils' work from all year groups. I met with a group of key stage 2 pupils and spoke to pupils informally at break and lunchtime. I spoke with some parents informally at the end of the school day.

I reviewed a range of the school's documents including its self-evaluation document, and documents relating to pupil progress, safeguarding and attendance. I checked the documents on the website.

I considered the views of 76 parents who responded to Parent View, Ofsted's online questionnaire, including 41 free-text responses. In addition, I took account of the 17 responses to the pupils' questionnaire and the 24 responses from the staff questionnaire.