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Mrs Rebecca Keitch  
Headteacher  
St George's Church of England Primary School  
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Dear Mrs Keitch

### **Short inspection of St George's Church of England Primary School, Great Bromley**

Following my visit to the school on 21 February 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 November 2013.

#### **This school continues to be good.**

The leadership team has maintained the good quality of education in the school since the last inspection. The school has been through an unsettled period of leadership having had an executive headteacher and an interim headteacher during your maternity leave. On your return to school you accurately analysed the school's performance and correctly identified the areas for improvement. We agreed that many of the measures have not been in place long enough to see the full impact on improving pupils' progress. Leaders need to ensure that the impact of each measure is fully evaluated and altered, where necessary, to ensure rapid progress for all groups of pupils.

Pupils are happy at school and enjoy learning. This is because relationships between pupils and adults are very positive. Staff know the pupils well and provide a nurturing learning environment. You and your staff have high expectations of the pupils and challenge and support them to achieve their best. The aim of leaders, including governors, is to ensure that pupils leave the school as confident, responsible young people who have the skills to tackle challenges.

Staff are proud to work at St George's and the overwhelming majority of parents are positive about the school. The following comment sums up the views of many parents: 'The staff at the school are welcoming, friendly and caring. Pupils are encouraged to strive harder to improve themselves academically, emotionally and personally.'

Teachers are enthusiastic and plan interesting learning activities. As a result, pupils enjoy learning, work well together and take pride in their work. Pupils are becoming resilient learners as they are prepared to persevere with their learning. Several told me that it is important to 'use [their] brains'.

Pupils behave well in lessons and around the school. Pupils told me that disruptions to lessons are extremely rare. Pupils play well together and show respect and courtesy for one another and for adults.

At the previous inspection, you were asked to raise attainment in mathematics by providing more problem-solving and investigative activities for pupils. Visits to mathematics lessons and the work in pupils' books provided solid evidence that you have successfully achieved this target. The changes you have made to mathematics teaching have had a positive impact on pupils' outcomes. Pupils' progress in mathematics at the end of key stage 2 has been well above average for two years. Attainment in mathematics has been above average at the end of Reception and key stages 1 and 2. You are not complacent about this improvement in standards. The mathematics leader is very clear about the actions required to continue to improve pupils' skills, especially in key stage 1.

At the previous inspection, inspectors also asked leaders to improve the quality of teaching by ensuring that teachers set work at the correct level of difficulty and ask challenging questions to extend pupils' thinking. Visits to lessons and the work in pupils' books indicate that teachers are now setting work that is closely matched to the pupils' level of ability. We observed some highly effective questioning by teachers and learning support assistants. For example, in mathematics pupils were being asked why they had chosen a particular method of calculation rather than an alternative method.

### **Safeguarding is effective.**

Keeping pupils safe is a high priority for all members of staff. Pupils who completed the Ofsted questionnaire and those I spoke to all said they feel safe in school. Pupils say bullying is rare and, should it occur, adults deal with it effectively. Pupils told me that adults listen and support them. In addition to school staff, pupils have the opportunity to talk to a well-being mentor. The curriculum provides many opportunities for teaching pupils about keeping safe. Pupils have a very good understanding of how to keep themselves safe when using the internet and other technology. The school runs annual workshops for parents on internet safety and keeps them updated via the school newsletter and website. Parents agree the school is a safe place. One parent described the school as 'a safe, positive environment, enabling all to reach their potential with confidence'.

Governors ensure that they carry out their statutory duties in relation to safeguarding. Leaders ensure that all the appropriate pre-employment checks are carried out on staff and volunteers before they work with pupils. The identity of visitors is carefully checked and they are provided with information about safeguarding. Staff are trained regularly in all aspects of keeping children safe and

they are vigilant. School records indicate that any concerns, no matter how small, are reported and followed up appropriately.

## **Inspection findings**

- Reading was a line of enquiry for this inspection as in 2017 key stage 2 pupils' progress had declined considerably when compared to previous years. You had already identified this as a key area of improvement for the school. A thorough analysis of test results has identified inference as the area of weakness. Pupils are not strong at reading between the lines. To address this, you have made changes to the way reading is taught, especially in key stage 2.
- We visited some guided reading lessons and witnessed some strong questioning by teachers. As a result, pupils were able to understand the meaning of unfamiliar words, to interpret characters' actions and make predictions about what might happen next based on their reading. Pupils are also using books more in other lessons, which is helping to improve their vocabulary.
- Younger pupils have strong phonics knowledge which they use well to read unfamiliar words. Most pupils enjoy reading and are reading books appropriate for their age. Accurate monitoring of pupils' progress is used well to target specific support for individuals which is helping them to quickly improve their reading skills. Early indicators suggest the changes made to the teaching of reading are having a positive impact on pupils' outcomes.
- Another line of enquiry for this inspection was to look at the progress of middle-ability pupils and whether they are being sufficiently challenged, especially in English. I chose to look at this because the proportion of middle-ability pupils attaining the expected level of attainment in reading and writing was below average. Middle-ability pupils also made less progress than other groups of pupils in the school.
- We looked at a range of work produced by middle-ability pupils in key stage 2. The evidence in pupils' books indicates that most middle-ability pupils are making good progress in a range of subjects, including English. This is because teachers are providing pupils with precise guidance that allows them to improve their work. Teachers also have high expectations of middle-ability pupils. We saw examples of work produced by middle attainers that is on a par with the most able pupils. This was especially evident when pupils were expected to draw conclusions or write evaluations.
- My final line of enquiry was to look at whether the curriculum provided the opportunity for pupils to develop subject-specific skills. I chose this because you have recently adapted the curriculum to include more opportunities for pupils to use their English and mathematical skills across a range of subjects. I wanted to ensure this did not reduce their opportunity to gain subject skills.
- The school provides pupils with a broad and balanced curriculum where subjects such as history, geography and art are taught through themes. The work in pupils' books indicates that pupils are gaining a good depth of subject knowledge, especially in Years 5 and 6. Books contained some very detailed work on the Stone Age and provided pupils with the opportunity to use historical

evidence.

- Visiting lessons, we saw pupils highly engaged in their learning because the work was interesting. For example, in a key stage 1 science lesson on properties of materials pupils were making umbrellas from a range of materials and testing them to ensure they were waterproof. Pupils in Years 3 and 4 were drawing self-portraits in the style of Picasso. They were able to confidently talk about their choice of colours and materials.
- Written work indicates that pupils are using their English and mathematics effectively in a range of subjects. However, the curriculum is still not providing enough opportunities for pupils to develop subject skills in sufficient depth for them to improve their work. For example, in science pupils are not provided with enough opportunities to improve their evaluation and prediction skills. We agreed this was an area for improvement.
- We also visited the Reception class. Children make a good start to their education in the early years because learning activities are well matched to each child's interests and ability. Learning is fun and presents a high level of challenge. Children make good progress and the number who attain a good level of development is consistently in line with or above average. The school makes sure that children are ready for key stage 1.

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

Leaders and those responsible for governance should ensure that:

- pupils are provided with the opportunity to develop subject-specific skills in greater depth in the foundation subjects
- they continue to monitor the impact of strategies to improve outcomes for pupils in reading and writing by evaluating their impact on progress and making the necessary changes in practice.

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**

During this inspection, I discussed the work of the school with you, the mathematics leader and two members of the governing body. I observed and spoke with pupils during playtime and lunchtime and met with a group from upper key stage 2. Together, we visited the classrooms to observe the pupils' learning. We looked at a

sample of pupils' books across a range of subjects in order to judge the impact of teaching over time. I reviewed a range of the school's documents including its self-evaluation form and documents relating to pupils' progress, safeguarding and attendance.

I considered the views of 47 parents who responded to Ofsted's online survey, Parent View, including 31 free-text responses. I also took into account the eight responses to Ofsted's staff survey and the 13 responses to the pupil survey.