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Mrs Tracey Jones  
Headteacher  
Priory Infant School  
Cannon Road  
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Kent  
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Dear Mrs Jones

### **Short inspection of Priory Infant School**

Following my visit to the school on 27 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 February 2014.

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

The leadership team has maintained the good quality of education in the school since the last inspection. Your highly effective and inspiring leadership is acknowledged by staff, parents and carers, and governors. The arrangement for your deputy headteacher to lead the school for one day every week is working very successfully. You both share unwavering determination to provide the best possible experiences for pupils and you have created a motivating and inspiring environment for learning. One parent wrote, 'The headteacher and deputy headteacher are fantastic leaders, open to giving the children new experiences to support and fulfil the learning potential of each child and to provide the teaching team with what they need for this to happen.'

You have a strong staff team that is proud of the school and morale is high. All of the staff say that they enjoy working at the school, are treated fairly and with respect and are well supported. You set great store in developing leaders and supporting staff to enhance their skills and expertise. Parents are very positive about the staff. A typical comment echoed by several parents was, 'The teachers are skilled, open and friendly, and willing to go the extra mile to help provide a positive place for children to learn and grow. The creative and enthusiastic teaching assistants support this.'

The school is a caring, nurturing place to be. Children thrive from the time they start in Reception Year. Pupils enjoy school and have fun learning. They are friendly and polite and keen to share their achievements. All of the pupils who responded to the survey felt that the school encourages them to be independent and take on

responsibilities. Behaviour is managed well so this is a calm and happy school where pupils are respectful of adults and each other. A parent expressed the views of several with the comment, 'At the heart of this school lies kindness, care and compassion, golden threads that ensure rich, high-quality, diverse and safe teaching and learning practices.'

You, leaders and governors accurately identify the school's strengths and the areas for further development from a range of monitoring activities. You have built on the strengths identified at the last inspection and successfully tackled the areas identified for improvement. As a result, standards in writing have risen. In 2017, the proportion of pupils that reached the expected standards in writing increased considerably from the previous year and was above that found nationally. You have correctly identified, however, a continuing focus on writing across the curriculum to increase the proportion of pupils that achieve greater depth in writing.

Children join the school with starting points generally below those typical for their age. They make strong progress throughout their time in the school. Disadvantaged pupils currently in the school make similar progress to others. The proportion of pupils that achieve the expected standard in reading, writing and mathematics by the end of Year 2 is above that found nationally. The proportion of pupils that reach greater depth in their learning increased significantly in 2017 and was above that found nationally in reading and mathematics but just below the national average in writing. You know that there is more work to do to ensure that teachers' planning consistently considers pupils' starting points to provide more challenge across the curriculum.

### **Safeguarding is effective.**

There is a strong culture of safeguarding in the school. Pupils' safety, well-being and welfare are paramount and given high priority. Pupils say that they feel safe and that they can turn to adults if they have any problems. Parents agree that the school keeps their children safe. One parent wrote, 'It is an environment that has made my child feel safe enough to learn, develop emotionally, and grow in confidence.'

Safeguarding arrangements are robust and fit for purpose. You and three other staff are trained as designated safeguarding leaders and so there is always someone for staff to go to if they have any concerns. Staff are well trained and have a good understanding of what to be aware of to keep children safe from a variety of risks, including those related to online safety. All staff are vigilant in following agreed procedures. A parent commented, 'I'm impressed with how they keep the children safe and will only let them out of the classroom door at the end of the day if the teacher/assistant can see the child's parent or carer.' Leaders work closely with outside agencies to ensure that pupils and their families who may be vulnerable get the extra support they need.

## Inspection findings

- At the start of the inspection, we agreed to focus on: pupils' achievement in writing; the teaching of phonics; how well the curriculum supports the learning of all groups; the provision for children's personal, social and emotional development in early years; and the effectiveness of safeguarding.
- You have introduced many initiatives to improve pupils' outcomes in writing. Pupils have opportunities to share their ideas and discuss their thoughts before they start writing. Pupils frequently contribute to the 'Writing Box' where they can share their independent writing from home or school. Your deputy headteacher, has led a project specifically to raise boys' achievement in writing. This resulted in an increase in the proportion of boys achieving the expected standard and closed the gap between the attainment of girls and boys. In 2017, disadvantaged pupils attained as well as others in writing and much better than they did the previous year. Governors keep a close check on the additional funding the school receives to make sure that it is making a difference for pupils. You are, rightly, aware that pupils' writing in their topic books is not always at the same standard as that in their writing books and that they do not have enough opportunities to write at length across the curriculum.
- Pupils' progress in phonics has improved. There has been an upward trend of improvement and in 2017, the proportion reaching the expected standard in Year 1 was above the national figure. You have reviewed and modified the planning for teaching phonics. Teachers and teaching assistants are well trained in teaching phonics and plan activities that meet pupils' needs well. A very close check is kept on pupils' progress and additional support is provided if pupils appear to be falling behind.
- The curriculum inspires pupils to learn and meets the needs and interests of all groups. The first thing most pupils said when asked about their learning was that it was fun. A parent wrote, 'This is a very creative and exciting school for my son to attend and they are constantly re-evaluating their teaching methods and introducing new and exciting ways to learn about the world.' You have already reflected on and identified a review of your curriculum, which is indicative of your relentless pursuit to give the pupils the best. As well as an appropriate focus on basic skills, you ensure that pupils experience a broad and balanced curriculum including special events and educational visits. Art has a high profile and there are very impressive displays of pupils' artwork around the school. We agreed that pupils could be further challenged to reach greater depth in their skills, knowledge and understanding across the curriculum if planning takes their starting points into account more consistently.
- Children get a good start to school in Reception Year. The proportion of children who reach a good level of development is close to that found nationally. This demonstrates rapid progress and good catch-up from starting points that are typically below those expected for their age, as a result of skilled teaching. You have made concerted and successful efforts to improve children's personal, social and emotional development and their communication and language skills. Topics and support activities are carefully chosen to promote these aspects well. Children's progress and achievements are assessed to inform their next steps and

to provide any additional help they may require. Good links with parents contribute to successful outcomes for children. One parent wrote: 'My son started the school this year and I feel 100% confident that every facet of his education and social development are catered for to a very high standard. The school has fantastic leadership and his teachers and teaching assistants constantly go above and beyond, not just for our son but for us as parents as well.'

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

Leaders and those responsible for governance should ensure that:

- they increase the proportion of pupils achieving greater depth in their learning
- there are more opportunities for pupils to write at length and for different purposes across the curriculum
- pupils' starting points in subjects across the curriculum are considered more consistently to provide greater challenge.

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

Yours sincerely

Margaret Coussins  
**Ofsted Inspector**

### **Information about the inspection**

I met with you and your deputy headteacher to discuss your evaluation of the school's effectiveness and the aspects to focus on during the inspection. I met with other leaders, the chair and the two vice-chairs of the governing body, and the local authority's improvement adviser. You or your deputy accompanied me on my visits to classes. I looked at pupils' work in their books and spoke to them about their learning. I observed pupils in the playground and in an assembly. I spoke to many pupils informally and met with a group of pupils at lunchtime and asked them for their views on the school. I reviewed the school's website and scrutinised a range of school records and documentation relating to safeguarding, attendance, monitoring and improvement, and information about pupils' progress. I took account of 31 responses to Ofsted's online survey, Parent View, including 22 free-text comments. I considered 11 responses to the staff survey and 27 responses to the pupil survey.