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Mr Allan Brown
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Dear Mr Brown

Short inspection of Southrop Church of England Primary School

Following my visit to the school on 1 March 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 March 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 have built on the strengths identified at the previous inspection. In particular, you continue to enjoy strong support from parents and carers in this tight-knit school community. You place the development of pupils' self-esteem and resilience at the heart of the school's work. Staff are well motivated; they respect your reflective and thoughtful leadership. You work effectively with the governing body. This has enabled you to develop a coherent succession plan for the transfer of leadership when you step down at the end of the year.

The caring ethos of the school shines through in many aspects of its work. Pupils who join at times other than Reception Year feel welcomed and included. You place an emphasis on Christian values and, consequently, pupils' spiritual and moral development is strong. Close links with the church ensure that the community is involved in the life of the school. Teachers and other adults know the pupils very well. They are particularly skilled in supporting pupils with special educational needs (SEN) and/or disabilities and so these pupils thrive. Over time, pupils' progress in reading, writing and mathematics has been strong. However, because the number of pupils in each year group is very small, published information about pupils' progress sometimes fluctuates.

At the previous inspection, you were asked to make sure the most able pupils were stretched so that they attain the highest possible outcomes. You have been

successful in increasing the progress of these pupils. For example, the most able pupils currently in Years 5 and 6 are already attaining at the expected standard in reading, writing and mathematics. Many are on track to attain at the higher standard by the end of key stage 2.

The proportion of children achieving a good level of development at the end of the Reception Year was not as high in the last two years as it had previously been. You have reacted to this and improved the early years provision. Children currently in the early years are learning well, but you are ambitious to develop this aspect of the school further.

Pupils' progress in writing dipped last year. You have used staff expertise in teaching writing to pinpoint areas to improve. Teachers have raised their expectations of pupils' writing in both the infant and junior classes and so pupils' achievement in writing is rising across the school. You recognise, though, that further work on pupils' spelling, punctuation and grammar is necessary. Pupils' progress in mathematics has been a strength of the school in recent years. You are passionate about developing pupils' confidence in mathematics further by introducing new teaching techniques. As a result, pupils' progress continues to be strong, and many pupils express a keen interest in mathematics.

Safeguarding is effective.

You have ensured that all safeguarding arrangements at the school are fit for purpose and records are detailed and of high quality. Regular training is provided for staff and this ensures that all staff can identify any pupils who are showing indications of harm. Although referrals to outside agencies are very rare, you document them well. Thorough checks are conducted when staff, governors or volunteers are appointed to work at the school.

Pupils feel safe at school. Incidents of poor behaviour or bullying are extremely rare. Pupils understand how to keep themselves safe online. You ensure that risks involved in school activities are assessed and minimised. For example, you take steps to ensure that pupils are safe when they walk through the village and cross the road to use the playing fields for sports. Parents express great confidence in the school and the ability of staff to keep pupils safe.

Inspection findings

- Pupils are taught in two classes. The infant class for children in Reception Year and pupils in Years 1 and 2, and the junior class for pupils in Years 3 to 6. Teachers and teaching assistants plan learning creatively so that pupils are grouped according to their different needs. As a result, pupils are provided consistently with activities which match their level of understanding and so challenge them to make progress.
- To decide if the school remained good, one of the lines of enquiry centred on the quality of provision in the early years foundation stage. In both 2016 and 2017 fewer children in the Reception Year achieved a good level of development than

the national average. Leaders increased the number of teaching assistants in the infant class from September 2017. Children now receive better support. Staff make good use of a local network of specialist early years teachers for sharing ideas and for moderation of their judgements about children's work.

- Teachers and other adults now make more accurate assessments of children's work and so build up a detailed picture of each child's emerging skills. This allows them to plan for each individual child's needs. Sometimes, though, the activities provided for children do not correspond closely enough to these needs. Children currently in the Reception Year are developing their basic skills well. A high proportion of them are on target to reach a good level of development by the time they enter Year 1.
- A second line of enquiry concerned pupils' progress in mathematics in Years 3 and 4. In the last 18 months, leaders have successfully introduced a new approach to teaching this subject. Teaching is more challenging, reflecting the higher demands of the revised curriculum. Training for staff has been effective in raising their confidence and skill. For example, teaching assistants are more adept at dealing with pupils' misconceptions and so help pupils catch up if they fall behind.
- The school's assessments of pupils' understanding, and other inspection evidence, show that pupils in Years 3 and 4 are making good progress. They are confident at performing calculations, but sometimes they lose heart too easily when mathematical questions are presented in words rather than numbers. Mathematics teaching is enthusiastic. Many pupils across the school express an interest in mathematics which reflects this enthusiasm.
- A third line of enquiry looked at the quality of pupils' writing. Year 6 pupils' progress in writing was below average in 2017, but has been much stronger in 2015 and 2016. This year, leaders have introduced a set of basic expectations of pupils' written work across the school. As a result of this renewed focus on the quality of their writing, in all years, pupils' skills are developing more rapidly.
- Teachers accept that some pupils do not yet use a wide range of punctuation in their work. Teaching in key stage 2 helps pupils make links between creative writing and other styles. For example, pupils studying 'Kensuke's Kingdom' linked their learning well to a non-fiction article about rainforests. Teaching uses a sophisticated level of language. Pupils respond well, and this leads to more refined use of language in their writing. The vast majority of current Year 6 pupils are already meeting the standards expected of them and so are well placed to make above average progress by the end of the year.
- Pupils behave well and support each other in and out of class. This contributes strongly to their learning. Pupils appreciate the family atmosphere in this small village school. They particularly appreciate the wide range of visits they are able to take part in. For example, a recent visit to a museum enhanced their topic work on the Egyptians. All of the parents who responded to the Parent View survey would recommend this school to others.

Next steps for the school

Leaders and those responsible for governance should ensure that:

- teachers extend the range of activities available for Reception Year children when they are given a free choice in the infant class
- teaching gives Year 3 and 4 pupils more opportunities to apply their calculation skills in a variety of unfamiliar situations
- key stage 2 pupils use a wider range of punctuation in their writing.

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

Yours sincerely

Paul Williams
Her Majesty's Inspector

Information about the inspection

During the inspection, I held meetings with you, your teachers and three governors. I held a telephone conversation with a representative of the local authority. I held a meeting with pupils from the school council and spoke with many other pupils informally. I made observations of learning across the school, looked at several examples of pupils' work and spoke with pupils during lessons. I scrutinised a variety of documents including the school's own evaluation of its performance, assessment information and records relating to safeguarding. I spoke with several parents and took account of one letter from a parent. I considered the responses from 18 parents to the Parent View online survey, five responses from staff and 26 responses from pupils.