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Mr Simon Manning
Headteacher
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Dear Mr Manning

Short inspection of Ruardean Church of England Primary School

Following my visit to the school on 21 February 2018 with Fiona Allen, 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 January 2014.

Based on the evidence gathered during this short inspection, I have identified some priorities for improvement which I advise the school to address. In light of these priorities, the school's next inspection will be a full section 5 inspection. **There is no change to the school's current overall effectiveness grade of good as a result of this inspection.**

Following the last inspection, the school was asked to improve the proportion of outstanding teaching to help pupils make rapid and sustained progress in writing and mathematics. However, the quality of teaching has declined since the previous inspection and too few pupils, particularly pupils who have special educational needs (SEN) and/or disabilities, achieved expected standards at the end of each key stage.

When you came to the school in September 2017, you quickly identified that standards needed to improve rapidly and you have taken concerted action to support teachers to improve the quality of their teaching, learning and assessment. You meet with teachers to discuss pupils' progress and you are raising their expectations of what pupils can achieve. Staff said that they feel well supported and are keen to work closely with you. You have implemented a new assessment system which helps teachers to have a better understanding of how well pupils are doing. Your relentless determination is paying dividends with improved teaching generally leading to stronger progress, particularly in mathematics. You are acutely aware that you will need to sustain improvements to teaching, so that pupils consistently achieve their best. There are still inconsistencies in teaching, particularly for disadvantaged pupils and pupils who have SEN and/or disabilities, which results in weaker progress. However, you are committed to helping pupils to

catch up by eliminating variations in the quality of teaching.

You have been proactive in getting to know your pupils and their families and this helps you to develop effective communication with them. Parents and carers speak highly of their regard for you and the emotional support the school provides for their children. Typical comments from parents include, 'The school has been amazing' and, 'Teachers have a committed, welcoming approach'. Parents also commented favourably on the improvements in their children's attitudes to learning due to the care and guidance provided in the communication and interaction centre. Pupils enjoy coming to school and are keen to learn. Adults form positive and caring relationships with pupils and, as a result, pupils feel valued and well supported.

Until relatively recently, governors have not had a secure understanding of pupils' achievement. However, you have taken swift action to raise their awareness of precisely what needs to improve and they are keen to support you in this. Governors are now beginning to ask the right questions to hold you and other leaders to account for the standards achieved. They recognise that they will need to develop the rigour of their monitoring to assure themselves that your actions are making a difference.

Safeguarding is effective.

All adults at the school are committed to pupils' safety and well-being, which ensures that pupils are well cared for. You provide relevant training for staff, which helps them to understand that safeguarding is everybody's responsibility. You keep detailed, confidential records and swiftly make referrals to external agencies when pupils need extra help. You do not hesitate in escalating your concerns further when the need arises, which helps to assure yourself that families are receiving appropriate support. You regularly check the impact of your actions to help you determine if further support is needed.

Leaders check that adults are safe to work with pupils and record this information on the school's single central register. Several staff have been trained to administer first aid and medication if required. You undertake risk assessments to ensure that pupils are safe on trips and you carry out drills so that everyone understands the procedures in the event of an emergency.

Pupils confirmed that adults in the school look after them well and that they have someone to turn to if they have any worries or problems. Pupils said behaviour is mostly good and that, when it is not, adults quickly sort out any issues. Pupils understand how to stay safe when using the internet and the school council members proudly described how they recently led an internet safety day to raise pupils' awareness of how to keep safe online.

Inspection findings

- We agreed that my first line of enquiry was to find out how well leaders are improving teaching in the early years and key stage 1, particularly in phonics. This is because, over time, the proportion of pupils achieving the standards expected of them at the end of each key stage has been considerably below that of pupils nationally. In addition, attainment in the phonics screening check at the end of Year 1 has improved, then declined. You use the benefit of your extensive experience of early years teaching to support the early years teacher to plan appropriate work to meet children's needs. As a result, all children currently in the early years are making effective progress. Improvements to teaching in key stage 1 are leading to strong progress in writing in Year 1 and in all subjects, particularly mathematics, in Year 2. The phonics training you provided for all infant teachers is improving the quality and consistency of phonics teaching. Consequently, pupils are now making better progress to secure their early reading skills.
- My second line of enquiry was to establish how well leaders support disadvantaged pupils and pupils who have SEN and/or disabilities. This is because, over time, too few pupils reach expected standards at the end of each key stage. Inspection activities revealed that adults who work in the 'Firs' communication and interaction centre use their good understanding of pupils' specific and complex needs to support pupils' emotional and social needs effectively. This helps pupils to apply themselves to their learning and several pupils make strong progress. However, across the school, teachers' expectations of what vulnerable pupils are capable of achieving are not consistently high enough. This means that teaching is not always sharply focused on meeting pupils' needs and, as a result, they do not make strong progress or achieve as well as they should.
- My third line of enquiry was to determine how effectively leaders are improving outcomes at key stage 2, because too few pupils achieve the standards expected of them. Pupils' books and your own recent assessment information reveal that improved teaching is having a positive impact on pupils' progress, particularly in mathematics. Higher proportions of pupils are now working at standards expected for their age. However, work that teachers set for pupils does not routinely take account of what pupils can already do or what they should be learning for their age. This hampers pupils' progress and restricts what they are able to achieve. In addition, subject leaders do not identify quickly enough when teaching needs to improve, which limits how well they can support teachers to help pupils make better progress.
- My final line of enquiry was to establish how well leaders and governors fulfil their safeguarding role with regard to reducing exclusions and improving attendance. You have revised the behaviour policy, which ensures that there is now a more consistent approach to the way that adults manage behaviour. Pupils understand the behaviour you expect from them and there have been no major behavioural issues since you started in post. Most pupils, parents and staff who expressed their views are satisfied with how pupils' behaviour is managed and confirm that when behaviour falls short of your expectations, it is swiftly

corrected. The school carefully follows up all absences and you work closely with parents, which has helped you to improve attendance. Some pupils have higher absence, which you are committed to reducing; however, other pupils are absent for legitimate and unavoidable reasons.

Next steps for the school

Leaders and those responsible for governance should ensure that:

- they continue to rapidly improve the quality of the teaching of reading, writing and mathematics across the school, to make sure that more pupils reach expected standards at the end of each key stage
- teachers' assessment more accurately identifies what pupils can already do, so that work consistently challenges them to make strong progress
- targeted support for disadvantaged pupils and pupils who have SEN and/or disabilities, particularly in mainstream classes, accelerates their progress so that they catch up
- leaders at all levels quickly identify when teaching needs to improve, so that they can intervene and support pupils to make better progress
- governors develop a better understanding of pupils' progress so they can monitor the work of the school more effectively and hold leaders to account
- they continue to build on the positive relationships with parents to make sure that all pupils attend regularly.

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

Catherine Beeks
Ofsted Inspector

Information about the inspection

We carried out most activities with you and the special educational needs coordinator (SENCo). I had a meeting with the chair of governors and a phone conversation with the local authority adviser. We scrutinised the school's single central record and attendance information and discussed your safeguarding procedures. We had a meeting to review your latest assessment information and I reviewed the school's self-evaluation summary and development plans. We undertook learning walks with either you or the SENCo, to review learning in several classes. We spoke with pupils in lessons, and during breaktime and lunchtime. I had

a formal meeting with several pupils from different year groups and one of us heard pupils read. We carried out a focused scrutiny of pupils' work in several year groups and we followed this up with a meeting with you to review our findings. We talked to several parents at the beginning of the school day and reviewed responses to your recent parents' questionnaire. I considered the nine responses to Ofsted's online survey, Parent View, and the four free-text comments. I reviewed the 16 responses to the online staff questionnaire and the six responses to the pupils' survey.