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Miss Rachael Harrington
Headteacher
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Dear Miss Harrington

Short inspection of Woodchurch Church of England Primary School

Following my visit to the school on 22 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 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 provided decisive, dynamic leadership and continued to drive improvement in the school during a period of significant staff change and a significant rise in the number of pupils joining the school at other than expected times. You care passionately about the well-being of children and staff. You have developed strong leadership skills from within the existing staff team. The new deputy headteacher is having a very positive impact on teaching and learning. All staff share your vision and there is a unity of purpose in driving improvement.

Parents and carers told me they like the harmonious, community feel to the school and how well teachers know and care for their children. 'My child has received amazing and wonderful support and is so happy at school thanks to the teachers and headteacher,' was a typical response when I met parents at the start of the school day.

Pupils achieve well at this school. The percentage of pupils reaching the expected standards in reading, writing and mathematics at the end of Year 6 are historically above the national average. You have focused on improving the quality of writing in the school and, as a result, writing progress and attainment over the last two years has been well above the national average. You are not complacent, however, and realise that leaders need to monitor the teaching of maths even more closely so

that pupils, especially prior middle attainers, are appropriately challenged. You were rightly concerned about the dip in standards in phonics in Year 1 in 2017. You have ensured that progress in phonics has increased rapidly in the current school year.

You have fostered strong links with other schools and with the local authority. As a result, your leadership team is highly reflective and constantly evaluates the impact of any initiatives. The local authority holds you in high regard. It values your high aspirations and determination to improve pupils' outcomes and well-being.

You have developed inviting, attractive classrooms, which promote high standards and independence in learning.

You have successfully tackled the areas that were identified in the last inspection as needing further improvement. Mathematics lessons now afford pupils opportunities to explore the relevance of topics in everyday situations. For example, Year 5 used their knowledge of perimeter and area to cost out flooring in rooms. This demonstrated the effectiveness of your drive to improve reasoning skills in mathematics. You were also asked to ensure that pupils developed their writing skills and used a full range of punctuation to make their writing more meaningful. I saw many examples of this, such as Year 6 pupils writing as soldiers from the WWI trenches.

I saw many excellent examples of more-able pupils working at a challenging level. You are now rightly focusing on pupils of middle ability tackling more difficult work, especially in mathematics.

Governors are committed, keen and rapidly building their skills and knowledge. They have begun to visit the school regularly to see for themselves what leaders are telling them. Governors would be even more effective in their monitoring role if they focused more sharply on outcomes of groups of pupils.

Safeguarding is effective.

The nurture and care for the individual are strengths of the school. Staff and governors place a high priority on keeping pupils safe. The leadership team has ensured that all safeguarding arrangements are fit for purpose. Pupils said they feel safe and secure when in school. They feel that there is always an adult available who will listen to any worries they have. All checks and procedures for recruiting staff safely are carried out and recorded diligently. Staff training in keeping children safe from harm is frequently updated.

The curriculum contributes to pupils' understanding of how to manage their own safety, for example when using the internet.

The school works closely with other agencies to protect pupils from neglect or abuse. The system for reporting concerns is well established and understood by all staff. Records are detailed and of high quality and show that responses are timely

and effective.

Inspection findings

- There has been a significant growth in the numbers of pupils joining the school other than at expected times during the year. You are rightly proud of the school's inclusive and nurturing culture. Parents told me their children settle quickly because they feel valued as individuals and make friends easily because pupils at the school are well behaved and friendly.
- One of my key lines of enquiry was to see if the high standards in writing achieved over the last two years were being maintained. On visiting classrooms and looking at pupils' work across year groups, it was clear that standards remain high. Progress is good and pupils know what they have to do to improve their work even further because of the guidance teachers give them. They love to write! Writing activity days are greatly anticipated as the pupils look forward eagerly to a 'wow' stimulus to respond to; for example, a mysterious hole appearing in the floor of the school hall, or wondering who had sent a strange box that had been delivered to the school.
- The proportion of pupils meeting the expected standard in phonics has been above the national average for two out of the last three years. My observations in lessons, hearing pupils read and work in pupils' books show that better progress is being made in phonics this year.
- Although reading attainment at the end of Year 6 was in line with expected standards for most pupils, it was lower for prior middle attainers. Leaders have responded by placing a whole-school focus on reading. Initiatives such as book week, 'book of the month' and establishing links with published authors have been implemented. Volunteer readers have been recruited to support individuals. As a result, current pupils are now making accelerated progress in reading and standards are rising for all groups.
- The maths leader is making sure that teachers use new maths materials well to sharpen pupils' understanding of basic calculation. As a result, progress of all pupils is improving and a much higher proportion of disadvantaged pupils are on track to meet end-of-year expectations than this time last year. You agree, however, that there remains some inconsistency across the school in matching task to ability in maths, particularly for prior middle attaining pupils, some of whom are capable of working at a greater depth than at present.
- Another line of enquiry was attendance. The most recent published information suggested that particular groups of pupils were persistently absent much more than is the case nationally. There is compelling evidence that the school is doing everything in its power to ensure that pupils attend school regularly. As a result, attendance is improving and is now at the same level as that expected nationally overall.
- The new special educational needs co-ordinator (SENCo) and family liaison officer work tirelessly to support those pupils who have special educational needs (SEN) or who are disadvantaged. Parents told me how they appreciated the way in which leaders persistently remove obstacles to learning for their children and

access services to support the family. Typical of parents' responses is, 'My son flourished thanks to the amazing support the school has given him.'

- A new chair and vice-chair of governors have recently been appointed. They are securing their knowledge of the school's strengths and aspects that the school need to improve. They visit the school to gather evidence to confirm the school's judgements. Governors agreed that their effectiveness would be even greater if they were more insightful and aware of the performance of groups of pupils.

Next steps for the school

Leaders and those responsible for governance should ensure that:

- tasks in mathematics are precisely and consistently matched to pupils' needs so that all pupils, particularly prior middle attainers, are sufficiently challenged
- training is provided for governors on how best to hold the school's leaders to account, particularly in the scrutiny of performance information.

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

Yours sincerely

Lynda Welham
Ofsted Inspector

Information about the inspection

During this inspection, I held several meetings with you, your deputy headteacher and your leaders of English, mathematics and Early Years. I met with representatives of the governing body and had a telephone call with a representative of the local authority. I also met with the office staff who deal with personnel procedures to scrutinise the school's safeguarding procedures. Your deputy headteacher and your head of early years accompanied me on my visits to classrooms. I talked with pupils about their learning; I looked at their books and I listened to a range of pupils read in Year 2. I considered a range of evidence, including the school's latest assessment information, attendance records, the school's self-evaluation, and safeguarding procedures and policies. I also looked at the online surveys completed by 19 staff and 110 pupils and I viewed the eight responses to Ofsted's online questionnaire, Parent View. I had conversations with parents and carers at the beginning of the day.