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Mrs Ann MacGregor
Headteacher
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Dear Mrs MacGregor

Short inspection of Holy Trinity CofE Primary School, Cuckfield

Following my visit to the school on 1 May 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 October 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 arrived at the school in 2016, at the end of an unsettled period where there had been no permanent headteacher and some aspects of the school's work had slipped. You quickly united the staff, parents and carers, and governors by explaining the weaknesses in the school and leading a drive for improvement. You were well supported by the senior leaders, governors and the local authority. There is widespread agreement among parents and staff that the school has improved significantly since then.

Pupils enjoy coming to school and are proud to be part of the Holy Trinity family. They behave impeccably and are polite, friendly and welcoming to visitors. Staff and parents echo this view. Senior leaders have placed the values of perseverance, aspiration, respect and teamwork at the heart of the school's work. Pupils understand and embrace these values and can explain how they help them in their life at school and at home. Pupils have very strong attitudes to learning. They appreciate the way that staff always find time to explain things if pupils do not understand, or provide greater challenge once they are ready to move on. Consequently, pupils currently in school are making good progress. Leaders provide pupils with many opportunities to take responsibility in the school and pupils fulfil responsibilities diligently.

Parents are very supportive of the school and many advised me that they were particularly appreciative of the care that staff offer pupils. One commented that the

school is, '... a very warm, safe, caring environment that fosters creativity and love of learning'. Several parents commented on the way that staff go out of their way to contact parents to talk through any concerns to do with pupils' learning or welfare.

Children get off to a good start in the early years. Staff take trouble to find out what interests children and plan activities accordingly. Children become enthusiastic learners and quickly develop the early skills of reading, writing and mathematics. In 2017, by the time pupils had reached Year 6, they had made good progress so that all pupils achieved age-related expectations in reading. Proportions of pupils achieving this standard in writing and mathematics were above the national average. These improved outcomes at the end of key stage 2, especially in writing, addressed the area for improvement that inspectors identified at the previous inspection. Leaders recognise that there is still work to be done to ensure that more of the most able pupils currently in the school achieve the greater depth standard in writing. However, at the end of key stage 1 in 2017, levels of attainment were well below those seen nationally in reading, writing and mathematics.

Governors have a good understanding of the school and understand its strengths and areas for improvement. They hold leaders to account for all aspects of the school's work. They also provide useful support for senior leaders in such matters as building works and more routine health and safety issues. This support enables leaders to focus more closely on the most important issues in the school, including further improving the quality of teaching and learning.

Safeguarding is effective.

The welfare, care and well-being of pupils are at the heart of this school's work. Staff are completely clear about their responsibilities to take care of pupils and are careful to record even small concerns. Senior leaders ensure that staff, volunteers and governors are provided with the right training and up-to-date advice about all aspects of safeguarding.

Systems, policies and procedures are securely in place to ensure that pupils are kept safe. Staff carry out all of the checks needed so that only suitable people are allowed to work in the school. Governors make sure that these checks have been carried out and fulfil all their other safeguarding responsibilities thoroughly.

Pupils feel completely safe in school. They trust staff to take care of them and know that if they have a worry there is always an adult with a listening ear. Pupils learn to stay safe in a range of different situations, including online, on the road and at the beach. Bullying is very rare, but pupils are confident that staff would deal with it quickly where necessary.

Inspection findings

- We agreed four aspects of the school's work to interrogate during this inspection. The first was to do with the effectiveness of leaders' and governors' actions to improve outcomes for pupils at the end of key stage 1, especially in writing and

mathematics. Leaders recognised that pupils' attainment at the end of Year 2 in 2017 was too low. Senior leaders have sharpened the quality of teaching in key stage 1 by ensuring that teachers have accurate assessment information and are able to track the progress of groups of pupils. As a result, teachers are clear about pupils who are making rapid progress, as well as those whose progress is less strong. Teachers use this information to target teaching and, where necessary, provide additional support for groups and individual pupils. Leaders have ensured that teachers have consistently high expectations for the quality of pupils' work and presentation. Introducing a consistent, joined handwriting style has also had a positive impact on how well pupils write. Furthermore, improvements in the teaching of phonics are helping pupils become increasingly confident, accurate spellers.

- Pupils make good progress in mathematics in key stage 1. The proportion on track to achieve the expected standard is in line with national figures. Teachers focus on providing pupils with the knowledge and understanding needed to learn well in mathematics. Work in pupils' books shows good progress in both writing and mathematics, including for the most able and disadvantaged pupils. However, although a greater proportion are on track to achieve age-related expectations at the end of Year 2, proportions of pupils on track to achieve the greater depth standard are still below those seen nationally.
- We also agreed to explore how well the most able pupils achieve in mathematics in key stage 2. Senior leaders recognised that in the past the progress of the most able pupils in mathematics was slower than other pupils' progress. Also, the proportion of most-able pupils who achieved the greater depth standard in mathematics was just below the group national average in 2017.
- New approaches to the teaching of mathematics in key stage 2 have focused first on ensuring that all pupils have a strong foundation of number facts so that they can perform calculations quickly and accurately. Teachers also ensure that pupils acquire a secure grasp of the concepts that underpin mathematics. Pupils are regularly given opportunities to apply their knowledge and understanding to solve problems in a range of contexts and to reason mathematically. For example, older pupils do this by explaining why a mathematical statement is true always, sometimes or never. This helps pupils to think things through mathematically and become more adept and confident at tackling unfamiliar mathematical problems. Consequently, a greater proportion of pupils in key stage 2 are currently on track to achieve the higher standards in mathematics, especially in Years 5 and 6.
- We looked at how well the wider curriculum provides pupils with the knowledge, skills and understanding needed to learn well in a range of subjects. Leaders have placed reading at the heart of the curriculum. The curriculum is full of interesting, exciting learning opportunities that engage pupils' interest and spark their curiosity. Science receives a high profile in the school and from a young age, pupils learn to investigate and find things out for themselves. Work in pupils' books is of a high standard across a wide range of subjects. Displays around the school reflect these high standards. Art and music have good coverage in the school's curriculum. Pupils learn instruments and perform publicly, not only to parents and classmates, but also to a wider audience, for example in a local

nursing home.

- Finally, we looked at how effectively leaders ensure that disadvantaged pupils attend school regularly. In 2017, this group of pupils was absent far more than other pupils in the school. Leaders clearly understand the importance of ensuring that all pupils benefit from regular attendance at school and have worked hard to engage with parents to drive this message home. This year, the attendance of disadvantaged pupils has improved significantly so that it is now much closer to the national average.

Next steps for the school

Leaders and those responsible for governance should ensure that:

- improvements in the quality of teaching in key stage 1 are reflected in pupils' outcomes with more pupils than in the past achieving age-related expectations and greater depth standards at the end of Year 2
- more pupils achieve the greater depth standard in writing by the end of key stage 2 than in the past.

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

Yours sincerely

Bruce Waelend
Ofsted Inspector

Information about the inspection

I met with you and members of the senior leadership team to discuss various aspects of the school's work. I also met with six members of the governing body and spoke with representatives of the local authority and the diocese in telephone conversations. I visited classes in all year groups with you to observe teaching and learning, to talk to pupils and look at their work. I observed pupils' behaviour around the school, including at playtime. Several pupils spoke with me on the playground at morning break. I also held a meeting with 11 pupils drawn from Years 2 to 6. I considered 30 responses to the staff survey, 32 responses to the pupil survey and 83 responses to Ofsted's online questionnaire, Parent View, as well as speaking to several parents at the beginning of the day. A range of documents, including the school's self-evaluation documents, school improvement plans, records of governors' meetings and safeguarding policies, procedures and checks were also taken into account.