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Ms Linda Oliver
Headteacher
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Dear Ms Oliver

Short inspection of Harrietsham Church of England Primary School

Following my visit to the school on 12 June 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 November 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 lead the school with a steady determination to ensure that pupils receive a good education. Your clear vision for the school successfully promotes pupils' well-being, strong Christian values and academic achievement. All staff who responded to Ofsted's questionnaire feel proud to work at the school.

Your evaluation of the school's effectiveness is accurate. Like you, governors are committed to further improvement and demonstrate a good understanding of the strengths and weaknesses of the school. They support you well and hold you firmly to account. Sensibly, they gather first-hand evidence in order to check the accuracy of the information you provide about pupils' progress and the school's wider development.

The school's helpful attention to pupils' well-being and mental health is particularly noticeable. Your innovative approach and assiduous work to help pupils' successfully manage their worries is greatly appreciated by pupils and parents. As a result, pupils are well equipped with a range of strategies and skills which support and develop their resilience.

Parents and carers are happy with their children's education. Pupils are happy to come to school, and this is reflected in the school's overall high attendance figures. The majority of parents who responded to Ofsted's online questionnaire, Parent View, and parents spoken to during the inspection, spoke positively about their

children's progress and school experience. Parents particularly appreciate that any concerns they may have are dealt with promptly, with one parent speaking for many: 'All the staff from the office, teachers and management are very approachable.'

Pupils have a strong understanding of the school's Christian values. These are evident in pupils' respectful interactions, both with each other and with adults. Pupils talk about how much they enjoy school, the charity work they do, and the extra-curricular activities the school offers. They appreciate the kindness of the staff and the useful help and guidance they receive from teachers. Pupils I spoke with were united in their conviction that everyone is accepted whatever their differences, saying, 'No-one excludes you here.' They proudly explained how all pupils have signed a commitment to being kind at all times, and as a result bullying is very rare.

Children get off to the best start possible when they join the school. In Reception, adults encourage children to explore their interests deeply. The dynamic leadership of early years has resulted in exceptional practice. Adults provide children with imaginative and appropriate resources to stimulate their creativity and develop learning. During the inspection, I observed a group of children working highly cooperatively and safely while building a 'vehicle for aliens' using real bricks, planks of wood and tyres.

Following the previous inspection, you were asked to provide more opportunities for pupils, particularly those in Reception, to practise their writing skills. You were also asked to develop the role of new leaders, including governors, in order to support staff more effectively and secure pupils' rapid progress. Pupils' work in their books shows that they write regularly at length and enjoy writing for many different purposes. In Reception, children are encouraged to write frequently about things that interest them. During the inspection, children were observed writing letters home and compiling lists of items they would 'like to take on a space rocket'. New governors have joined the governing body, and the structure of governance has changed to ensure that all governors are well informed. You have sensibly ensured that the assistant headteacher has more time available to provide increased leadership support across the school. You are continuing to develop the effectiveness of your subject and middle leaders although you recognise there is more work to do as the school expands to become two-form entry in September 2018.

Safeguarding is effective.

The leadership team ensures that all safeguarding arrangements are fit for purpose. Records are detailed and accurate and the relevant recruitment checks are fully completed. Governors are highly diligent in checking the work of leaders, and they visit the school often to check that safeguarding records are up to date.

You ensure that all staff receive appropriate training, including their duty to prevent extremism and radicalisation. Staff know pupils very well, so they are alert to any concerns, which they follow up quickly. You are tenacious in ensuring that the right

support is made available to vulnerable pupils and their families. You act promptly on information you receive, and work effectively with relevant agencies and other professionals.

Pupils say they feel safe. All staff, and the vast majority of parents, report that the school keeps pupils safe. You have carefully considered how parents and visitors access the school site across the playground, and have taken sensible steps to ensure pupils' safety. Pupils feel confident to talk to staff if they have any concerns, and feel these are resolved satisfactorily. The school equips pupils with the knowledge and skills to keep themselves safe online. This work is further enhanced by helpful workshops for parents, with one parent commenting: 'The school has done some really good workshops on cyber grooming, which is important in the modern technological world.'

Inspection findings

- During this inspection, we looked closely at specific aspects of the school's provision, including: the effectiveness of the teaching of mathematics; provision for the most able pupils; and how areas of the curriculum other than English and mathematics develop pupils' knowledge, skills and understanding.
- You have sensibly ensured that the teaching of mathematics continues to be a top priority in the school improvement plan. In 2017, the proportion of pupils achieving the expected standard and greater depth in mathematics at the end of key stage 1 was broadly average. However, the proportion of pupils achieving age-related expectations and the higher standard in mathematics at the end of key stage 2, although improved from the previous year, remains below that found nationally.
- Helpful staff training and support from the school's mathematics specialist is successfully strengthening teachers' subject knowledge. Work seen in pupils' books, and the school's own performance information, shows evidence of current pupils making strong progress from their starting points. Pupils' work shows there are valuable opportunities for them to tackle increasingly complex mathematical problems, which is developing their reasoning skills. Leaders closely monitor pupils' books to ensure that high standards are developed and maintained. Teachers identify where pupils need further support, and effective intervention is swiftly provided.
- In 2016 and 2017, the proportion of pupils achieving the higher standard at the end of key stage 2 remained below national figures in reading, writing and mathematics. You have correctly identified this as an area for improvement. You are working hard to ensure that teachers consistently set tasks at the right level of challenge.
- A review of pupils' work showed that teachers are now providing more stretch and challenge. This is enabling current pupils, including more of the most able, to achieve higher standards. Teachers' feedback usually meets leaders' expectations, encouraging pupils to think more deeply about their work. For example, as a result of feedback pupils were able to explain why a water pump is like a heart. Pupils respond to feedback by correcting their work and also by

explaining their thinking when asked to do so. This raises pupils' expectations for their own achievement and supports them to develop their thinking further.

- The curriculum provides many interesting opportunities to enliven learning and develop pupils' knowledge, understanding and skills. These include studying interesting topics such as 'The Great Fire of London' and 'The Wild West' as well as learning about local history. Pupils talk about these with enthusiasm. Teachers are developing pupils' practical skills through scientific enquiry and opportunities to participate in scientific experiments. Exciting musical activities and inspiring trips and visitors support pupils' learning. Work in current pupils' books shows that the school places equal attention to all subjects other than just mathematics and English.

Next steps for the school

Leaders and those responsible for governance should ensure that:

- the most able pupils are routinely challenged to ensure that a higher proportion exceed age-related expectations at the end of key stage 2, particularly in mathematics
- middle leaders' work maintains and further develops improved outcomes in all areas of the curriculum as the school grows.

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

Frances Nation
Her Majesty's Inspector

Information about the inspection

During this inspection we visited classrooms together and talked to pupils about their work. I scrutinised a wide range of documentation, including information about pupils' achievement, leaders' evaluation of the school's effectiveness, and safeguarding checks, policies and procedures. I met with pupils from key stage 1 and key stage 2 and heard them read. I looked at a wide range of pupils' work with the assistant headteacher. I met with six members of the governing body, including the chair of governors. I met with a representative of the local authority. I considered 23 responses to Ofsted's staff questionnaire, 46 responses to Ofsted's pupil survey, and 44 responses to Ofsted's online questionnaire, Parent View, as well as speaking with a number of parents.