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25 September 2018

Gemma Roxburgh
Interim Head of School
Wadhurst Church of England Primary School
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Dear Mrs Roxburgh

Short inspection of Wadhurst Church of England Primary School

Following my visit to the school on 12 September 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 December 2014.

This school continues to be good.

The leadership team has maintained the good quality of education in the school since the last inspection. Leaders and governors work highly effectively together. They show ambition and aspiration for all pupils. The team's steadfast approach ensures that pupils continue to receive strong academic support and that their well-being continues to be closely looked after. The local authority has been instrumental in providing helpful and useful support to the school, and this is ongoing. The school's friendly ethos and outward-looking approach reflect leaders' and governors' determination to provide a variety of experiences to develop pupils' interests and knowledge. As one governor explained, 'it is about the individual we pass on'.

Your evaluation of the school's effectiveness is accurate. Like you, governors are committed to further improvement and they demonstrate an insightful understanding of the strengths and weaknesses of the school. Governors hold leaders firmly to account, checking the assertions of leaders for themselves through their regular monitoring visits.

Parents and carers are happy with their children's education. Pupils are keen to come to school and this is reflected in the school's overall high attendance figures. An overwhelming majority of parents who responded to Ofsted's online questionnaire, Parent View, and parents spoken to during the inspection talked positively about their children's progress and school experience. Parents particularly appreciate that any concerns that they may have are dealt with promptly and say

that 'staff always have time for you'. One parent summed up the views of many by saying, 'This is a kind school.'

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 demonstrate exemplary behaviour and are polite and courteous to visitors. They listen well in lessons and apply themselves to their learning with enthusiasm and determination. Pupils feel strongly that everyone is treated in the same way and that any differences are accepted. Older pupils greatly value the responsibilities that they are given, such as those of prefects, house captains, sports captains and play leaders. These opportunities prepare pupils well for the next stage of their education.

Leaders and governors pride themselves on positive relationships and active engagement with the wider community. For example, the school's daily exercise activity has increased pupils' levels of fitness and, as a result, has inspired families to take part in the local park run.

At the time of the last inspection, you were asked to improve the quality of teaching by raising teachers' expectations of what pupils can achieve and by ensuring that they always present their work well. Work in pupils' books shows that pupils take pride in their work and present it to a high standard. Leaders have been successful in improving pupils' attitudes to their learning and behaviour. In classes, pupils were observed working with a high level of concentration and independence. Inspired by the school's high expectations, pupils regularly challenge themselves and say that they know how to improve their work.

You were also asked to improve the outdoor areas available to the Reception Year classes. The outdoor area and improved resources now contribute well to the strong start that children get off to in the early years. You were asked to further develop the school's curriculum so that lessons in all subjects capture pupils' interest. Pupils report that they enjoy a variety of opportunities, such as sporting competitions, visits and after-school clubs. Work in their books shows that they are regularly taught subjects such as science, history and geography, and engage in thought-provoking philosophical debates. Subject leaders are now sharpening the assessment of pupils' learning in subjects other than English and mathematics.

You were asked to improve leadership so that all leaders make a significant contribution to improving teaching and pupils' achievement. Leadership roles are now firmly established across the school, and leaders work highly effectively as a team to continuously improve teaching and pupils' outcomes.

Safeguarding is effective.

The leadership team ensures that all safeguarding requirements are fit for purpose. Leaders ensure that checks on staff are completed thoroughly before they start employment. Governors fully understand their responsibilities to keep pupils safe. They carefully evaluate information gathered from regular audits and take prompt

action when changes are needed.

Leaders make sure that all staff receive appropriate and up-to-date training, including about their duty to prevent extremism and radicalisation. Leaders encourage staff to 'think the unthinkable' and, as a result, they are highly alert to pupils' needs. Staff report concerns conscientiously, and school leaders swiftly follow these up, resolute in ensuring that the right support is made available to vulnerable pupils and their families.

All pupils spoken to said that they feel safe at school. They like the friendly and welcoming atmosphere and say that pupils are rarely unkind to each other. They feel confident that staff would help them if they had any worries. Pupils can confidently describe how to keep themselves safe online because e-safety is an integral part of the school's curriculum and they know how to report any concerns they may have.

Inspection findings

- During this inspection, we looked closely at specific aspects of the school's provision, including: the effectiveness of leaders' work to ensure that disadvantaged pupils achieve well; provision for pupils who have special educational needs (SEN) and/or disabilities; how effectively leadership and the quality of teaching contribute to improving pupils outcomes; and how areas of the curriculum other than English and mathematics develop pupils' knowledge, skills and understanding.
- Leaders, governors and staff are united in their ambition for disadvantaged pupils to achieve well. Careful use of additional funding ensures that extra support is carefully matched to each pupil's personal needs. Their progress is meticulously tracked and support promptly adapted if required. Consequently, the school's progress information and work in current pupils' books shows many disadvantaged pupils are making strong progress from their starting points. You recognise that there is further work to do to ensure that they catch up with their peers.
- Teachers and teaching assistants know pupils well. The caring and inclusive nature of the school means that pupils who have SEN and/or disabilities are well supported. Staff ensure that they adapt tasks so that learning is appropriately pitched for this group of pupils, while encouraging pupils to work independently wherever possible. A more focused approach is needed for the small number of pupils who find learning how to read challenging. These pupils are not equipped well enough with strategies to help them sound out words, and this further slows their progress.
- Leaders encourage and provide opportunities for staff to reflect on and improve their practice. As a result, the quality of teaching is strong. The proportion of pupils at the end of Reception Year achieving a good level of development has risen over the last three years. Key stage 1 and key stage 2 attainment at the expected standard for reading, writing and mathematics in 2017 was above national averages. The school's own information about pupils' attainment

indicates that this trend is continuing.

- The curriculum provides many interesting opportunities to enliven learning. These include studying stimulating topics and making links to high-quality texts. For example, older pupils greatly enjoyed their project on the Second World War. Assessment in subjects other than English and mathematics has recently been implemented but it is not yet fully developed. You rightly recognise that there is more work to do to further develop pupils' skills, knowledge and understanding in some areas of the curriculum. Relevant work to improve this is already planned for this year.

Next steps for the school

Leaders and those responsible for governance should ensure that:

- pupils who find reading difficult develop their phonics skills more reliably in order to support their progress
- they further develop the curriculum in subjects other than English and mathematics so that it successfully builds pupils' skills, knowledge and understanding.

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 East Sussex. 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 with the deputy headteacher 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, the school development plan, and safeguarding checks, policies and procedures. I met with a small group of pupils and heard them read. I looked at a range of pupils' work with middle leaders. I met with three governors, including the chair of the governing body. I held a telephone conversation with a representative of the local authority. I considered 14 responses to Ofsted's staff questionnaire, 43 responses to Ofsted's pupil survey, 11 responses to Ofsted's online questionnaire, Parent View, and one letter from a parent, as well as speaking informally with a number of parents.