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Mrs Karen Dodd  
Headteacher  
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Dear Mrs Dodd

### **Short inspection of Crockenhill Primary School**

Following my visit to the school on 27 March 2019, 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 2015.

#### **This school continues to be good.**

The leadership team has maintained the good quality of education in the school since the last inspection. You joined the school in September 2018. Before your arrival, the school had a brief unsettled period, when there had been an interim headteacher for a term. Together with senior leaders and governors, you quickly identified the school's many strengths and highlighted the areas for development. Senior leaders and governors are clear-sighted and ambitious for the school to improve further.

The school's community is strongly inclusive and welcoming. Senior leaders have high expectations that are reflected in the standards set for what pupils can achieve. All who work at the school embrace these. Leaders also place the well-being of pupils at the heart everything the school does. One parent recognised this, saying: 'The school does a great job at developing children into well-rounded people, not focusing purely on the academic but also on their roles as citizens.'

Pupils enjoy coming to the school. They appreciate the interesting and challenging lessons that teachers provide. Teachers have good subject knowledge, enabling them to explain things clearly to pupils and ask questions that make pupils think carefully about what they are learning. Pupils know that there is always something extra to challenge them, once they have understood. One pupil said of their teacher, 'She pushes us to the limit, because she knows we can do it. She gives us courage.' New approaches to the teaching of mathematics enable pupils to solve challenging problems and apply their understanding of mathematics in different

situations. This successfully addresses the areas for improvement from the previous inspection. Teachers and support staff are also quick to offer pupils help when they are struggling and, if needed, provide additional support later in the day.

Pupils behave well in lessons and around the school. They have positive attitudes to learning, enjoy their work and take pride in it. They work hard, because learning is well matched to their interests and abilities. In a singing assembly and in the lunch hall, pupils were well-behaved and polite. However, at breaktimes some pupils' behaviour is inconsiderate and thoughtless. There is some rough play, especially among boys, and games of football cause frequent arguments and fallings out. Although staff are on the playground, not all intervene or notice quickly enough when play is becoming rough.

Parents and carers are mostly positive about the school and the great majority who expressed an opinion would recommend the school to others. Almost all parents pointed to the fact that their children are safe, happy and well looked after in the school. A few parents feel that leaders could improve the school's communication systems to keep them better informed.

Governors have a strong, strategic view of the school and use a range of evidence to reach their accurate evaluation of its strengths and weaknesses. They have a broad range of skills and experience, which they use to challenge senior leaders and drive improvements.

### **Safeguarding is effective.**

The leadership team has ensured that all safeguarding arrangements are fit for purpose. Leaders have established a strong culture of safeguarding, in which all adults understand and embrace their responsibility to keep pupils safe.

Senior leaders provide staff with up-to-date training, so staff are well equipped to recognise the signs that a pupil may be at risk and report these promptly. Staff understand the importance of reporting and recording even minor issues, as they may contribute to a bigger picture of wider concerns. Staff understand how to apply the school's whistleblowing policy if they feel that senior leaders are not taking the right actions to safeguard pupils.

Pupils feel safe in the school. They have confidence that staff will look after them, listen to any concerns they raise and act in their best interests. The curriculum provides many opportunities to learn about keeping safe. For example, pupils learn to ride bicycles safely, to stay safe while around traffic and how to act if they are caught in a fire. Pupils also learn how to keep safe when online.

### **Inspection findings**

- During the inspection, I focused on three areas of the school's work. The first was to consider how well the curriculum enables pupils to achieve well in a wide range of subjects. The curriculum is broad and rich, providing pupils with a variety of experiences that engage their interest. Pupils enjoy many trips and

visits to exciting places, including the Natural History Museum, Chiddingstone Castle and the Horniman Museum. They also benefit from clubs outside the school day, including the recently formed science club, which has a fervent following. Senior leaders place a high value on physical education. There is an extensive range of games and sports on offer, including boccia, handball and curling.

- Reading plays an important role in the school. Pupils enjoy learning from the exciting texts that teachers use, and these help pupils to become skilful, knowledgeable readers. Pupils talk eagerly about authors and the books that they have enjoyed. Pupils' reading equips them with a rich vocabulary and supports them to become skilful writers.
- Senior leaders have had a particular focus this year on improving the teaching of science and religious education (RE). Middle leaders have introduced new approaches to the teaching of these subjects, so that they are taught in greater depth, enabling pupils to acquire more knowledge and deeper understanding.
- Work in science books shows that pupils design and carry out experiments regularly and use the results from these to draw logical conclusions. Even young pupils in the school talk enthusiastically about the experiments they have done with candles and melting ice. In RE, pupils tackle quite challenging concepts and ideas from the world's major religions, helping them to understand and respect people's different beliefs. The work seen in pupils' books across the curriculum typically mirrors the high standards seen in their writing and mathematics books.
- The second area I considered was the effectiveness of leaders' actions to enable disadvantaged pupils to achieve well. Disadvantaged pupils have achieved well at the end of key stages 1 and 2 in the last two years, although the proportions who achieved the higher standards have been below those seen nationally.
- Senior leaders and governors have a clear understanding of the barriers to learning that these pupils face and have spent the additional funding wisely to help overcome these challenges. Disadvantaged pupils currently in the school are making strong progress. In some writing books that we looked at, disadvantaged pupils are clearly making stronger progress than other pupils with the same starting points. However, this strong progress, sometimes from low starting points, is not allowing many to achieve the higher standards by the end of key stages 1 and 2.
- Finally, I considered how well provision in the early years enables boys to achieve well. Children get off to a good start in the early years. Most make good progress from their starting points, some of which are low. Girls achieve particularly well. In 2018, all girls reached a good level of development. Only half of the boys reached this. In the previous year, more boys reached a good level of development, but there was still a significant gender gap, with more girls than boys meeting this standard.
- Current provision in the Reception class helps children to acquire the early skills needed for reading, writing and mathematics. Staff enable children to recognise letters and the sounds they represent and use phonics for early reading and writing activities. For example, we saw a teacher helping a group of children,

including several boys, to write a list of things that they would need to take on a trip to space. The boys were excited and joined in well.

- When working independently on their chosen activities, boys show weaker attitudes to learning than girls and often lose focus quickly. Some struggle to concentrate. Staff intervene to ask questions, make suggestions or join in with the activity to help boys make the most of their play. However, boys do not always take up the challenge and some quickly drift to another activity.

### **Next steps for the school**

Leaders and those responsible for governance should ensure that:

- behaviour on the playground improves and consistently mirrors the high standards of behaviour seen in lessons and around the school
- boys in the early years make stronger progress, so that the gender gap is reduced.

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

Yours sincerely

Bruce Waelend  
**Ofsted Inspector**

### **Information about the inspection**

I met with you and the special educational needs coordinator to discuss various aspects of the school's work. I also met with the wider leadership team to discuss the school's self-evaluation. I had a meeting with three middle leaders to discuss the curriculum and also spoke to several members of staff around the school during the day. Four members of the governing body met with me to discuss their role in the school and I had a meeting with a representative of the local authority.

We visited all classes to observe teaching and learning, talking to pupils and looking at their work. I observed pupils' behaviour around the school, including at playtime. Several pupils spoke with me on the playground during morning breaktime and I had a meeting with 12 pupils from Years 1 to 6 to gather their views of the school. I also spoke with parents on the playground at the start of the day.

I considered 31 responses to the staff survey, 15 responses to the pupil survey and 31 responses to Ofsted's online questionnaire Parent View, including 21 written comments from parents. A range of documents, including the school's self-evaluation documents, school improvement plans, and safeguarding policies, procedures and checks, were also taken into account.