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Mr Tim Hunter-Whitehouse
Headteacher
St Peter-in-Thamet C of E Junior School
Grange Road
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Dear Mr Hunter-Whitehouse

Short inspection of St Peter-in-Thamet C of E Junior School

Following my visit to the school on 8 May 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 April 2015.

This school continues to be good.

The leadership team has maintained the good quality of education in the school since the last inspection. Based on the evidence gathered during this short inspection, I am of the opinion that the school has demonstrated strong practice and marked improvement in specific areas. This may indicate that the school has improved significantly overall. Therefore, I am recommending that the school's next inspection be a section 5 inspection.

You, your leadership team and governors provide very strong and ambitious leadership with clear direction and a very strong sense of purpose. This motivates staff and pupils to achieve exceptionally well and ensures that the school continues to improve. Parents, carers, staff, pupils and governors have every confidence in the high quality of your leadership. Your track record of expertise is also acknowledged by the local authority through your executive leadership of another primary school. Parents value your leadership. One wrote, 'The headteacher is very friendly, goes out of his way to make sure he knows every child well, and is always a visible and approachable presence in school.'

You have created a culture of high aspirations and achievement. Everyone works together to give pupils every opportunity to achieve as well as they can in their academic and in their personal development. The school is a highly inclusive, nurturing and welcoming place to be. One parent commented, 'The school has a nurturing, holistic approach to education. Staff value academic subjects but also greatly value the child as an individual and pupils' well-being.' The vibrant, exciting

and broad curriculum is notable for inspiring pupils to excel and gather a wide range of skills and expertise from memorable learning experiences. Your newly created Forest School is expanding outdoor learning opportunities.

Pupils are a credit to their school and have a strong voice in the school. They continue to be very well behaved, as reported in the previous inspection. They are extremely polite and articulate. Pupils have very positive attitudes to learning. Their enthusiasm for school is infectious. They believe they learn well because, they said, 'Bubbly, happy teachers inspire us, encourage us to share ideas and help us love to learn.' A group of pupils agreed with one who said, 'We love school because every morning the headteacher tells us it will be a fantastic day, and it is.'

You have maintained and improved on the strengths in teaching and learning reported in the previous inspection. Pupils achieve highly and continue to make very good progress. In 2018, progress rates improved in reading and particularly in writing. The proportions of pupils that achieved the expected standards in reading, writing and mathematics continued to be above the national averages. Notably, the proportions of pupils that achieved the higher standards increased from the previous year, when they were below the national averages, to above the national averages. Pupils' progress in reading and writing, however, was stronger than it was in mathematics. Skilled and innovative leadership in mathematics has ensured that pupils are now making strong progress in the subject. Pupils' writing shows the very positive impact of the actions taken for improvement. The school's focus on reading for enjoyment is evident all around the school, in all classrooms and in the pupils' enthusiastic and animated discussions on their favourite books and authors.

The school is a true learning community. Pupils thoroughly enjoy their learning and develop curious and enquiring minds. Leaders and staff welcome the opportunities to undertake research projects, collaborate with other professionals and to share ideas and practice. There is shared ambition and pursuit of excellence. You have a very sharp awareness of the school's strengths and areas for further development. You have successfully addressed the areas for improvement identified in the previous inspection. Rigorous and accurate monitoring by leaders and governors identifies current priorities. You have correctly identified your ongoing focus on further refining the curriculum and expanding and establishing outdoor learning. Experienced and skilled governors provide you with a good balance of support and robust challenge. They know the school very well and work productively with staff.

Parents are overwhelmingly positive about the school. Parents commented particularly on the wealth of opportunities and range of activities available to their children. One parent summed up the views of very many parents with the comment, 'The drama is exceptional, and I truly commend the emphasis the school puts on supporting and encouraging creativity in children – be it music, art, drama or dancing. This, in turn, improves the confidence, concentration and creativity in more academic subjects such as English, science and maths.' Another wrote, 'We are so pleased that this school recognises the importance of the creative arts as well as academic subjects, something which offers self-expression and cultural enrichment.'

Safeguarding is effective.

Leaders have ensured that there is a strong culture of safeguarding in the school. Pupils' well-being and welfare are paramount. Training for staff and governors is compliant with all current regulations and guidance. As a result, there is a thorough understanding of how to spot any potential issues and raise concerns. Staff are vigilant and know what to do to keep pupils safe from a variety of risks, including those relating to online activity. The required checks are made on the suitability of all who work or volunteer in the school. The designated safeguarding leaders act swiftly if concerns are raised and liaise well with other agencies to ensure that pupils receive timely and effective support.

Staff, parents and pupils agree that the school keeps pupils safe. Pupils say that they feel safe and happy in school. They say that they know they can turn to staff for support if they have any problems and that they know they will be listened to. Pupils take an active role in promoting safety across the school. One parent wrote, 'The staff go above and beyond in terms of safeguarding and the children's well-being.' Another wrote, 'The school has created a safe and welcoming environment for the children where they feel valued and encouraged to learn.'

Inspection findings

- At the start of the inspection, we agreed to focus on some key areas of the school's work. As well as inspecting safeguarding, I explored pupils' achievement in writing, the provision and leadership of pupils with special educational needs and/or disabilities (SEND), and how well leaders ensure that the curriculum meets the needs and interests of the pupils.
- I looked at writing in pupils' books, writing displayed in classrooms and around the school and spoke to pupils about their writing. The successful actions that leaders have taken to improve writing are clearly evident. In 2018, pupils' rates of progress in writing improved dramatically from the previous year and were above average. The proportion of pupils that achieved the expected standard or greater depth in writing by the end of Year 6 was above the national average.
- The quality of pupils' written work is impressive in English and in different subjects, and of a high standard. Expectations are high from teachers and by the pupils of themselves. Teachers' commitment to ensuring that pupils experience a wide range of quality and challenging texts has a marked impact on the quality of their writing. For example, pupils are aware of the reader as they write and are ambitious in using a rich, creative and extensive vocabulary. Pupils write very effectively for different purposes and know how to improve their work.
- The provision for pupils with SEND in all year groups is strong and ensures that this group continues to make good progress from their various starting points. Pupils receive individualised and highly effective intervention. Their progress is carefully tracked to make sure that they are benefiting from the most appropriate support. Leadership is skilled, strong and determined to provide the best possible support for pupils and their families.

- Subject leaders are highly effective. They have a very positive impact on the quality of teaching and learning and the outcomes for pupils in their subjects. They lead their curriculum teams with great enthusiasm and depth of subject knowledge. Leaders' skills and expertise are recognised beyond the school. Leaders are innovative and creative.

Next steps for the school

Leaders and those responsible for governance should ensure that:

- they forge ahead with their plans to further refine the curriculum, including the expansion of outdoor learning.

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

Margaret Coussins
Ofsted Inspector

Information about the inspection

The inspector met with you and your deputy and assistant headteachers. I also met with subject leaders. I met with the chair of the governing body and two other governors. I had a telephone conversation with the local authority adviser. Your deputy or assistant headteacher accompanied me on visits to classes. During these visits, I spoke to pupils about their learning and looked at their work. I spoke to pupils around the school, asking them for their views on the school. I met with a group of pupils to look at and talk about their writing.

I reviewed the school's website and sampled a range of documents and records, including your evaluation of the school's effectiveness, information about pupils' achievement, and documents relating to safeguarding. I took into account the 129 responses to Ofsted's online questionnaire, Parent View, including 64 free-text comments, and spoke with some parents at the start of the day. I also considered the 36 responses to Ofsted's staff survey.