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Mrs Zoe Stone  
Headteacher  
The Churchill School  
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Kent  
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Dear Mrs Stone

### **Short inspection of The Churchill School**

Following my visit to the school on 23 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 May 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 provide strong and highly effective leadership and have created a happy, caring and friendly school. Parents, staff and governors have every confidence in your leadership. You are very well supported by your deputy headteacher and other senior leaders. All leaders, staff and governors have a shared vision and purpose, which is to provide the best for the pupils. Everyone works as a strong and determined team to ensure that this happens.

You have maintained and improved upon the areas of strength reported in the previous inspection and have successfully tackled the areas for improvement. Rigorous and effective monitoring means that you have an accurate view of the school's strengths and the areas for further work. In 2018, the proportion of pupils who achieved the expected and higher standards in reading, writing and mathematics by the end of Year 6 continued to be above the national averages. Progress rates improved in reading and particularly in writing. However, progress was stronger in English than it was in mathematics. The actions that you have taken are strengthening pupils' progress in mathematics and you have rightly identified a continuing focus on this work.

You set great store by developing leaders and ensuring that they make a significant contribution to school improvement. You and your staff are outward looking and ensure that the latest educational research informs the strategies and approaches that you use in school. Experienced and skilled governors know the school well and

work productively with you and your staff. The governing body provides a good balance of support and challenge.

Pupils are excellent ambassadors for the school. They have a strong voice in the school and thoroughly enjoy their time there. Pupils continue to be very well behaved, as reported in the previous inspection. They are confident, friendly and polite. Pupils have very positive attitudes to learning and said that their teachers are very supportive. One parent wrote that pupils 'build positive relationships with their teachers and teaching assistants that help fuel their thirst for learning.'

Parents are very positive about the school, and several wrote about how much their children enjoyed coming to school and that their learning was fun. One parent summed this up and wrote: 'Their teachers and teaching assistants are passionate about their teaching and are committed to ensuring children reach their full potential in a fun and creative environment.' Many parents commented very positively on the fact that you and other leaders are always visible and accessible. One wrote, 'Members of the senior leadership team are always on hand to offer advice and support.' Parents also wrote about their children's enthusiasm for the range of topics and clubs that they experience.

### **Safeguarding is effective.**

Leaders have ensured that there is a strong culture of safeguarding in the school and all safeguarding arrangements are fit for purpose. There is a clear awareness that safeguarding is everyone's responsibility and that pupils' well-being and safety are paramount. All staff are well trained in all aspects of safeguarding. They know the pupils very well and have a thorough understanding of how to spot any issues and raise concerns. They are vigilant in doing so. The designated safeguarding leaders act swiftly if concerns are raised. They liaise well with other agencies to ensure that pupils receive timely and effective support. Your recent decision to move to an online system is an indication of your determination to have the most effective and efficient systems and procedures for protecting pupils and keeping them safe. The required checks are made on the suitability of all who work or volunteer in the school. The governing body fulfils its statutory duty regarding safeguarding.

Pupils say that they feel safe and secure in school. Checks are made to ensure safety on the site. A group agreed with one pupil, who said, 'We're safe in school, because no one can get in and no one can get out.' Appropriate risk assessments are made for the many trips that pupils make. There are very positive relationships between pupils and staff, so pupils have the confidence to turn to staff should any problems arise. Parents and staff agree that pupils are safe and well looked after. Parents appreciate the 'friendly school with a great community spirit' and say that the school is 'like an extended family,' to ensure that pupils are safe and happy in their learning and their play.

## Inspection findings

- At the start of the inspection, we agreed to focus on some key aspects of the school's work. As well as inspecting safeguarding, I explored: pupils' progress in mathematics; pupils' phonics skills and reading in key stage 1; and the impact of leaders' work on improving teaching and learning and ensuring that pupils have opportunities to use their basic skills across the curriculum.
- The successful actions that leaders have taken so far to improve pupils' progress in mathematics are clearly evident. Clear objectives are taught with a strong focus on pupils of all abilities developing mathematical reasoning skills. Teachers make sure that mathematics is real and relevant for the pupils and, where appropriate, linked to their learning in other subjects. As a consequence, pupils generally enjoy mathematics, develop skills well and enjoy learning. A group agreed: 'We love problem solving; we do so much more of that now.' Current pupils are now making similar rates of progress in mathematics to that in reading and writing. You rightly acknowledge, however, that to ensure that the improvements are fully embedded and that all pupils are challenged to enrich their mathematical learning you will continue to focus on the subject.
- In 2018, the proportion of Year 1 pupils who achieved the expected standard in the phonics screening check was, unusually, below the national average. The inspection evidence showed that there were no issues with the quality of the teaching of phonics skills that prompted this dip. On the contrary, phonics teaching is secure and confident. Pupils' reading and writing show that they are applying their skills well and building effectively on the stronger skills they are acquiring in the early years. Leaders gave convincing evidence that the dip could be attributed to the high level of mobility in the Year 1 classes. Leaders are making sure that pupils who need to are catching up well in Year 2. Pupils' reading skills enable them to learn well in other subjects. However, as you have identified, there is scope for greater challenge in all subjects in key stage 1, including for the most able readers.
- You responded decisively to the issues for improvement in the previous report. Since the beginning of this year, your new team of leaders for learning are having a positive impact on supporting and further improving the quality of teaching and learning. They have effective oversight of a cohesive curriculum that meets the needs and interests of all groups of pupils. The curriculum is designed so that pupils have many opportunities to use their basic skills in reading, writing and mathematics in their learning across the curriculum. This leadership team is influential in driving improvement through, for example, working with colleagues, providing training and engaging in a range of supportive monitoring activities. The leaders form a strong and effective team that makes certain that there is consistency of approach in curriculum implementation across the school.

## Next steps for the school

Leaders and those responsible for governance should ensure that:

- the focus on mathematics is sustained to embed the teaching and learning approaches and to continue to strengthen pupils' progress
- there are increased opportunities to challenge pupils in key stage 1 so that more achieve above-average outcomes in their skills, knowledge and understanding.

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

Margaret Coussins  
**Ofsted Inspector**

### **Information about the inspection**

The inspector met with you, your deputy, assistant headteachers and leaders of learning. I met with the chair of the governing body and two other governors. I met with the local authority adviser. You and your deputy or an 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 and in the playground, asking them for their views on the school.

I reviewed your school's website and sampled a range of documents and records, including your school plan and evaluation of the school's effectiveness, information about pupils' achievement, and documents relating to safeguarding. I took into account 68 responses to Ofsted's online questionnaire, Parent View, including 34 free text comments, and spoke to some parents at the start of the day. I also considered 18 responses to Ofsted's staff survey.