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Mrs Gail Smith and Mrs Louise Webb  
Deputy Headteachers  
Silchester Church of England Primary School  
School Lane  
Silchester  
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Berkshire  
RG7 2NJ

Dear Mrs Smith and Mrs Webb

### **Short inspection of Silchester Church of England Primary School**

Following my visit to the school on 18 June 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.**

In the headteacher's absence, you are continuing to maintain the good quality of education in the school. You were both appointed as deputy headteachers in September 2018. Through your appointments, senior leadership at the school has been strengthened and leaders have been enabled to implement necessary changes. The introduction of a robust monitoring system, which holds teachers more readily to account, is having a positive effect on both the quality of teaching and pupils' progress throughout the school. You have an accurate understanding of the school's strengths and areas for further development and are determined that the school continues to improve from its present position.

Governors know the school well and are aware of the priorities for improvement. They challenge school leaders effectively. For example, they ask probing questions and seek out the information needed to inform them about the progress made by specific groups of pupils. They have also challenged leaders about the effectiveness of procedures regarding the collection of pupils in key stage 2 at the end of the school day.

Leaders have addressed the last inspection's recommendation to develop the role of subject leaders. Subject leaders are now holding members of staff more readily to account than in the past. They are given opportunities to observe teaching, to undertake moderation and to be observed teaching their own subject by others. As a result, subject leaders report that they now have a much better understanding of the quality of teaching and of pupils' learning in their subject area. Leaders use this

information to provide appropriate courses and training, where necessary. You have recently established curriculum teams to enable staff to work together. Previously, it was felt that subject leaders were left to work in isolation. Early indications are that this approach is welcomed by staff, as they now have others to discuss potential developments with.

The previous report asked leaders to ensure that work given to pupils of all abilities was at an appropriate level of challenge. Staff have undertaken training since the previous inspection to ensure that lesson planning takes account of the needs of all abilities and that the work given to pupils is of sufficient challenge. There is clear evidence that, in most classes, this recommendation is being addressed. In some year groups, however, the level of challenge, particularly for the most able pupils, is not yet consistently accurate in mathematics.

Pupils enjoy coming to school. They describe their teachers as kind and fair and their lessons as interesting. Several Year 6 pupils told me that, although they were excited about going to secondary school, they would be sad to leave Silchester because it was such a friendly school where children got on well together.

Most parents are very supportive of the school and a high proportion would recommend the school to others. One parent, echoing the views of many, reported that 'Silchester offers its pupils a safe and encouraging place to learn. It always goes above and beyond to offer pupils extra opportunities and is inclusive to all.' Some parents, however, feel that communication, particularly about the current arrangements regarding the leadership of the school, could be improved.

### **Safeguarding is effective.**

School staff know the pupils in their care and their families well. Leaders ensure that safeguarding procedures are effective and fit for purpose and that records are carefully maintained. Regular training means that school staff know what to do if they have a concern about a child. Safeguarding is a standing agenda item at all staff meetings. Governors monitor the school's safeguarding work, for example through the completion of audits and talking with staff and pupils to ensure that policies are put into practice.

Pupils say that they feel safe at school. They have a good understanding of how to keep themselves safe in a variety of situations, for example when using the internet or mobile phones. Pupils say that, should they have a problem at school, they know that a member of staff would help them to resolve it. They say that bullying does happen from time to time. However, staff deal with it quickly and effectively.

### **Inspection findings**

- At the start of the inspection, we agreed to look at specific areas of the school's provision: the effectiveness of safeguarding arrangements; the teaching of mathematics; the progress of disadvantaged pupils; the progress of pupils with special educational needs and/or disabilities (SEND); and the breadth and

balance of the curriculum.

- The rates of progress made by pupils in mathematics, particularly the most able pupils, between the end of key stage 1 and the end of key stage 2 have fallen recently. As a result, some pupils do not always attain the higher standards of which they are capable. The mathematics leaders have started to address this by changing the way that mathematics is planned and taught throughout the school. There are now more opportunities for the most able pupils to extend their thinking during mathematics lessons. This practice is not, however, consistent across all year groups. Most pupils at the school are developing good computational skills but cannot always apply these to word problems as they do not all have a sound understanding of mathematical vocabulary. Staff have received some training to ensure that their own mathematical knowledge is secure. However, not all staff are confident in the use and understanding of mathematical terminology.
- There are too few disadvantaged pupils at the school to compare their progress with the progress made by pupils nationally. Some of these pupils also have additional learning needs. Current school progress information and work in pupils' books indicate that disadvantaged pupils currently at the school are making strong progress from their starting points. The funding that the school receives for disadvantaged pupils is used effectively to ensure that these pupils play a full and active role within the school.
- Pupils with SEND are well supported at the school. Pupils are monitored, and interventions and appropriate support are put in place, as required. The support experienced is regularly reviewed and adjusted as needed. Leaders have developed a tracking system which records effectively the progress made from these pupils' various starting points. Current school progress information and pupils' work indicate that the majority of pupils with SEND are making good progress from their starting points.
- The curriculum is broad and balanced. Work in pupils' books, displays of pupils' work and visits to the classrooms demonstrate that subjects such as art, music and history are taught across the school. The quality of the art on display is particularly impressive. Useful links have been made between subjects, for example by using a high-quality novel in English work to engage pupils' interest in a particular historical period. The curriculum is further enhanced by themed weeks, for example during 'Shakespeare week', when pupils worked along members of the Young Shakespeare Company and one class visited Shakespeare's birthplace at Stratford-upon-Avon. You are also developing the opportunities for pupils to work in the environment. You are already recognised as a 'Trailblazing' school and are currently undertaking an audit to become an eco-school. In addition, the school offers many extra-curricular clubs for pupils to participate in, including choir, tag rugby and netball. You are currently reviewing and developing the curriculum to ensure that the local area is used more extensively than at present. You are also strengthening the part that the school plays within the community and are, at present, working alongside the parish council to improve neglected areas of the local environment. There are exciting plans to explore ways to further develop these links during the next academic

year.

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

- Leaders should ensure that they continue to improve the quality of the teaching of mathematics by:
  - ensuring that all staff have secure mathematical knowledge
  - making sure that staff consistently provide challenging activities for the most able pupils so that more achieve a high standard of mathematics.

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

Yours sincerely

Brian Macdonald  
**Ofsted Inspector**

### **Information about the inspection**

At the time of the inspection, I worked with the two deputy headteachers who are deputising for the headteacher while she is absent from school.

During the inspection, I met with the two deputy headteachers to discuss the school's self-evaluation and plans for improvement. Together, we visited every class to observe pupils learning, talk to them and look at their work. We also looked at the quality of work in pupils' books. I met with three governors, and also met with the two mathematics leaders. I held a telephone conversation with a representative of the local authority.

I considered the school's documentation on pupils' progress and attainment, safeguarding and governance. During breaktime, I spoke informally to pupils to gather their views of the school. There were no responses to Ofsted's pupil questionnaire. I took account of the views of parents by analysing 65 responses to Ofsted's online questionnaire Parent View, including 59 free text comments. I also considered 17 responses to the staff survey.