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Mrs Stephanie Hayward
Headteacher
St Matthew's High Brooms Church of England Voluntary Controlled Primary School
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Dear Mrs Hayward

Short inspection of St Matthew's High Brooms Church of England Voluntary Controlled Primary School

Following my visit to the school on 19 July 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 July 2014.

This school continues to be good.

The leadership team has maintained the good quality of education in the school since the last inspection.

Since your arrival last year, you have worked with leaders, including governors, to develop secure school self-evaluation. As a result, everyone is aware of the strengths and weaknesses of the school. This accurate understanding is underpinned by detailed analysis of pupils' performance and regular review of initiatives. Highly effective governor visits have helped governors to have a good understanding of key aspects of school development. Subject leaders have used the evaluation to create and implement appropriate development plans, keeping a careful eye on the effectiveness of these plans by regular checks on pupils' progress. Well-focused professional dialogue, both within the school and across the wider locality, underpins decisions and initiatives. Local authority support has been well targeted and effective, and is supporting leaders in developing accuracy in their school evaluation. You are united with your deputies in your aspirations for the pupils of St Matthew's and share a sense of excitement about the future. As a result, outcomes are strengthening and morale is high.

Pupils enjoy coming to school. They know that their voice is valued and listened to if they have any worries. They told me that teachers help them resolve friendship problems, although they are encouraged to resolve smaller issues by themselves, knowing that support is there if they need it. Pupils articulate the values of the

school clearly. They told me, 'We like to persevere.' They also demonstrate these values in their behaviour and work across the school. Pupils work well together and help each other. For example, a pupil who had broken her arm was supported by a friend in cutting and assembling a model bird box. Pupils are polite and friendly around the school, wishing adults a cheery 'good morning' and opening doors.

Leaders have taken effective action to address the improvement areas from the last inspection. Pupils present their work well, as seen in the work in their books, which demonstrates clear progress, and shows that work is mostly matched well to their abilities. Leaders are not complacent, however, and acknowledge that there is further work to do to embed recent initiatives and to develop the curriculum fully across all subject areas. While pupils' progress is strengthening within the year, and most pupils are attaining well, disadvantaged pupils in some year groups in key stage 2 do not attain as well as other pupils nationally.

Safeguarding is effective.

Processes and systems for recruitment are clear, and follow appropriate guidelines and documentation. Child protection is at the heart of the school. Staff receive regular training and know the appropriate steps to take if they have concerns. These are reported, recorded and acted upon in a timely fashion, as and when necessary. Staff work well with other agencies when it is appropriate to do so.

Pupils told me that they feel safe at the school. They trust in the adults to act to keep them safe. Ninety-nine per cent of parents who completed the Ofsted survey, Parent View, and all of those who spoke to me, felt that their children were safe at school. Leaders ensure that the curriculum develops pupils' knowledge of how to keep themselves safe appropriately, including when online. Governors maintain an effective oversight of safeguarding to ensure it is secure.

Inspection findings

- During the inspection we looked in detail together at some aspects of the school's work, including the effectiveness of leaders' actions to raise levels of pupils' attendance. Attendance overall has improved this year, although regular school attendance remains a challenge for some families and pupils. School leaders are taking a range of appropriate actions to support improved attendance for disadvantaged pupils, a group whose attendance remains stubbornly low.
- We also looked at the achievement of disadvantaged pupils across the school. Even when taking into account the number of disadvantaged pupils who either join or leave the school at various times during the school term, their progress, by comparison with national comparisons at the end of key stage 2, has been low over time. Their progress has been especially low in reading and mathematics. Current progress information, together with work in pupils' books, shows strong and improving progress for most pupils from their starting points at the beginning of this year. However, in some year groups there remain gaps between the attainment of disadvantaged pupils and other pupils nationally. Their books

demonstrate progress in sentence construction and punctuation, particularly in key stage 1.

- Leaders' actions to raise the profile of reading have been effective. Pupils told me, 'I used to hate reading, but I love it now.' Pupils appreciate the revamped and restocked library. They told me, 'The library has helped us to get into reading.' This has been part of an ongoing drive to widen pupils' reading habits.
- We also looked together at the teaching of mathematics in key stage 2. Leaders were disappointed with outcomes in the national assessments at the end of key stage 2 in 2017. This followed the introduction of a new approach to teaching mathematics, which has now been in place longer and is making a difference. Consequently, outcomes have strengthened. Pupils' workbooks show well-developed mathematical reasoning and regular problem-solving activities. Pupils' mental arithmetic skills have been strengthened by practising their times tables regularly and taking advantage of increased opportunities to use basic arithmetic. Practical resources are well used to help develop mathematical understanding. A pupil told me that the regular arithmetic tasks had helped him to grow in confidence as a mathematician. Another said that, 'I couldn't do the bus stop method – but I can now!'
- The curriculum has been revised to build on the clear strengths in art, design, physical education and music across the curriculum. Leaders acknowledge there is more to do in other areas such as science, humanities and religious education to fully develop pupils' subject-specific skills, knowledge and understanding. Pupils enjoy the exciting curriculum, particularly developing their practical experiences, such as when watching ducklings hatch. These memorable experiences are used well to build learning. Pupils' mathematical and English skills are well developed within these meaningful contexts. Expectations of English are consistently high across the wider curriculum.
- During the inspection I also considered the effectiveness of governance. Governors have a good understanding of the strengths and weaknesses of the school, and the context in which it works. They are united in working with leadership and the staff team to secure the very best provision for pupils. Governors are reflective. They develop their practice, for example through visiting the school to understand school improvement areas in depth. They are constantly looking for ways to improve. This includes developing a sharper focus in monitoring data linked to disadvantaged pupils' outcomes. In this way they support and challenge leaders effectively.

Next steps for the school

Leaders and those responsible for governance should ensure that:

- outcomes for disadvantaged pupils are further strengthened, particularly in key stage 2
- pupils systematically and consistently develop skills, knowledge and understanding across the breadth of the curriculum.

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

Yours sincerely

Deborah Gordon
Ofsted Inspector

Information about the inspection

I met with you, members of the governing body, staff, and a representative from the local authority. I had a telephone conversation with a representative from the diocese. I reviewed documentation, including information about pupils' achievement, the school improvement plan, safeguarding checks, policies and procedures. Together, we visited classes across the school. In classes I observed learning, looked at books, and spoke to pupils about their work. I met with pupils to get their views of the school. I met parents in the playground in the morning to take account of their views, and considered 78 responses to Ofsted's online questionnaire, Parent View, including 50 free-text responses.