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Mrs Toni Browne
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Dear Mrs Browne

Short inspection of Folkestone, St Peter's Church of England Primary School

Following my visit to the school on 26 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 November 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 lead a dedicated and enthusiastic team. Parents who talked to me were very positive about the way that the school is led and managed. They appreciate that their children are seen as individuals and that staff care for them well. One constant feature I felt throughout the inspection was that a sense of 'family' underpins all aspects of day-to-day life at the school. One pupil told me about how she had a great feeling of 'togetherness' with staff and her many friends.

Classroom visits showed pupils to be working hard and enjoying their learning. They were happy to talk to me about their work. Older pupils were keen to tell me about their recent work on rainforests. They were also keen to tell me where to shop ethically for ice cream, without adding to deforestation or contributing to the destruction of habitats. Their books showed me that most were making good progress across a range of subjects, including in science. One younger pupil enjoyed telling me that his favourite subject was science, because he liked the 'experiments' he carried out, including trying to make objects float.

At the time of the last inspection, the inspector acknowledged the many strengths of the school. These included that the teaching of phonics was particularly effective and that pupils were making good progress in reading, writing and mathematics. The inspector also identified that pupils did not always present their work well enough. She was also concerned that the rates of persistent absence of pupils from disadvantaged backgrounds were too high.

Leaders have addressed these aspects successfully. Most pupils present their work well. It was clear to me that they take a great pride in their work, as well as in the school. Leaders have also reduced rates of absence, particularly the rates of persistent absence of pupils from disadvantaged backgrounds, which now compare favourably with those of other primary schools.

Since the last inspection, you have continued the important process of self-evaluation. You were able to explain the school's many strengths, as well as the priorities for improvement. You recognise the need to increase the rates of progress pupils make in their writing by the end of key stage 2. You have also started work to develop the curriculum, so that it better meets the needs of pupils in the school.

Safeguarding is effective.

Arrangements to safeguard pupils are effective. Policies, systems and day-to-day routines are sound. The culture to keep pupils safe is strong. Staff have a clear understanding of their responsibilities. Their training is up to date and they know what to do if they have concerns. You have recently introduced an electronic system to record concerns, including those regarding behaviour and attendance. This has improved communication and enabled leaders to deal with issues more efficiently.

All parents who spoke to me feel that their children are safe at school. The very large majority of parents who completed Ofsted's online survey expressed an opinion that their children feel safe in school. Pupils told me that they feel happy and safe in school. They also told me that they feel free from any form of bullying, and that poor behaviour rarely impacts on their learning.

Inspection findings

- Work to develop the curriculum is ongoing. Leaders recognise the strengths of the current curriculum, but also know that more could be done to create capacity for staff to achieve greater breadth and balance in what they teach. Leaders are also keenly aware that creating clearer links between subjects and themes will enable pupils to build their knowledge and understanding more effectively over time and as they progress through the school.
- Pupils enjoy the extra-curricular activities the school offers, which include a range of sporting and activity clubs. Trips into the local community are the norm, including to support pupils' learning and engagement in the arts. Staff are particularly mindful of providing pupils with opportunities that might not normally be open to them. These include trips to London theatres and residential trips for older pupils.
- The quality of provision for disadvantaged pupils is a strength of the school. Leaders and governors monitor outcomes for these pupils well. All staff have high expectations for this vulnerable group. They aspire for every child, no matter what their background, to achieve well and become a successful learner.
- The progress disadvantaged pupils make across the school is strong. This includes in the early years. Although small numbers of pupils mean that using and comparing national progress and attainment data prove unreliable, it is plain

to see that pupils from disadvantaged backgrounds make at least good progress from their different starting points in a range of subjects.

- Most pupils make good progress in writing as they move through the school. However, leaders are determined to improve this to match the stronger progress that pupils make in reading and mathematics.
- Increasing opportunities for pupils to write at length, focusing staff on developing pupils' language skills, as well as developing role play and drama across the curriculum are all having a positive impact on improving pupils' writing skills. Leaders understand that developing the curriculum further will create capacity for teachers to exploit more opportunities for pupils to write, linked to the interesting topics they are learning about.

Next steps for the school

Leaders and those responsible for governance should ensure that:

- the progress pupils make in writing increases to match the strong progress they make in reading and mathematics by the end of Year 6
- further work to review and refine the curriculum is completed in a timely manner, and that this work continues over time to ensure that the curriculum fully meets the needs of all pupils in the school.

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

Clive Close

Her Majesty's Inspector

Information about the inspection

During the inspection I visited classrooms, assessing the progress pupils were making, looking at their work and talking to them about their learning. All classroom visits were accompanied by the senior leaders. I observed pupils' behaviour in classrooms, at the start of the school day, at breaktime and as they moved around the school. I met with school leaders, the chair and vice-chair of governors accompanied by two other governors, the office manager and with a representative group of pupils. I talked to parents at the start of the school day and considered 15 replies to Ofsted's online parent questionnaire and accompanying text messages. I also met with a representative of the local authority. A wide range of documentation was scrutinised, including the single central record, pupils' progress information, the school's self-evaluation, improvement planning, policies, notes of visits from the local authority and minutes of governing body meetings.