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Dear Gail Spragg

Short inspection of The John Wesley Church of England Methodist Voluntary Aided Primary School

Following my visit to the school on 9 November 2016, 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 January 2012.

This school continues to be good.

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

You continue to provide effective leadership. The school has expanded significantly since the last inspection and you have built a team of senior leaders who closely work with you but who are also dynamic leaders in their own right. Leaders, at all levels, know what is working well in the school and what the next steps are.

Governance has improved since the last inspection. Governors have looked carefully at the skills they have and intentionally recruited new governors with professional knowledge and expertise. Governors know the school very well. Governors have a clear understanding of the most recently published performance information because they have sought prompt and effective training. Governors visit the school regularly. Visits have a clear focus and enable governors to get first-hand information to support their strategic decision-making.

Your school remains highly inclusive. The proportion of pupils who have special educational needs and/or disabilities is more than double the national average. The school is a calm and nurturing environment. Older children move freely around the school and are courteous and polite. Younger children and vulnerable pupils are

sensitively supported as they move in and out of classrooms to receive extra teaching. Classrooms are busy, purposeful places where pupils, including those who are working significantly below expected standards, focus well on the task at hand.

At the time of the last inspection, leaders were asked to raise standards in English in key stage 1 and accelerate the speed of school improvement. You have been highly effective in raising standards in reading over time. Between 2013 and 2015 the proportion of pupils reaching the expected standard in reading at the end of Year 2 rose from being significantly below to being broadly in line with national averages. In July 2016, the proportion of pupils reading at the expected standard was the same as that seen nationally. You have also increased the proportion of pupils reaching the expected standard in the Year 1 phonics screening check. In 2013, the proportion was below the national average. For the last three years the proportion has been above that seen nationally and is increasing.

Standards in writing at the end of key stage 1 have improved steadily but there is more to do. Leaders' analysis of recently published performance information is sharply focused and evaluative. Leaders and the local authority have a shared view that children's language and communication skills need to be further developed in the early years to ensure that more children in key stage 1 have the vocabulary and understanding to succeed in their writing.

Leaders have begun to make improvements in the early years that better promote speaking and listening opportunities. However, some of the planned experiences do not actively inspire children to be creative and talk about what they are doing.

Safeguarding is effective.

The leadership team has ensured that all safeguarding arrangements are fit for purpose.

Leaders have created a culture in the school where safeguarding is given high prominence. For example, leaders have chosen to embed safeguarding statements as part of their school vision on their website. Leaders keep detailed records that are of good quality. Leaders are particularly effective in tracking their attempts to contact and their work with vulnerable families. Leaders' referrals to other agencies are robust, including those to Early Help. Parents feel that their children are safe and happy in school.

Inspection findings

- Leaders have a clear understanding of what is working well and what the school needs to do next. Leaders have taken decisive and swift action over time when teaching has not been effective. Leaders are highly evaluative and actively seek the professional judgements of others regarding teaching and learning in their school.
- Leaders have recruited a trained speech and language therapist to improve the early identification of children with speech and language needs. Screening tools

are used effectively and children who require additional support are identified quickly.

- Governance is strong and effective. Governors systematically review their knowledge and skills and actively recruit expertise where required. For example, the complications of a school expansion led governors to recruit a construction specialist. Governors have also recruited two educationalists, with a clear insight into school performance information.
- Governors know the school well and rigorously hold leaders to account. Governors ask searching questions of leaders because they understand performance information. Governors visit the school in a planned and systematic way to see for themselves what they are told in meetings. Governors join teaching and learning reviews, which involve other local headteachers and the local authority. Governors then use what they learn to ask pertinent questions. Leaders and governors are clear about how their roles and responsibilities differ and this means that they work together effectively.
- Leaders have already made improvements to the early years to increase further the proportion of children who are ready for Year 1. For example, children are given good opportunities to pretend and make believe, which promotes their spoken language development. However, too many of the planned opportunities do not develop children's creativity or speaking skills well enough. Leaders know this and the school has already taken steps to secure further training and development for staff.
- Disadvantaged pupils, including those who have special educational needs and/or disabilities, make good progress from their significantly lower starting points in the early years.
- The small number of disadvantaged pupils who do not meet the expected standard in the Year 1 phonics screening check make good progress. Those who have special educational needs and/or disabilities make good progress against the small steps within the early years curriculum. Planned learning takes account of pupils' significantly lower starting points.
- The most able readers are able to use and apply their phonic knowledge in their writing. They read back their work and learning intentions in their books with fluency.
- Pupils in Year 2 who are not working at the expected standard make rapid progress. Leaders know these pupils well and have planned a range of effective strategies to accelerate progress. Pupils make clear progress in how they use their phonic knowledge to write words that they are unfamiliar with. They are confident and competent to break a word down into the sounds they can hear. The quality of the handwriting, accuracy in spelling and volume of work that pupils produce have improved significantly and these pupils are catching up.
- Most pupils in Year 1 are working at the expected standard in their writing. Pupils who did not quite reach a good level of development make good progress and catch up quickly.
- Teachers have high expectations of pupils' writing across the curriculum and this is contributing to accelerated progress, particularly in Year 2. Pupils in their

religious education and topic books write extended pieces of work, which means that they can fully practise and apply what they have learnt in literacy lessons.

- Leaders are highly effective in identifying pupils who have special educational needs and/or disabilities. Individual plans contain appropriate small-step targets that are reviewed regularly. Class teachers and leaders use a range of suitable tracking tools to evidence progress, including for those pupils who are working at levels that are significantly below age-related expectations. Pupils who have special educational needs and/or disabilities make good progress from their starting points in key stage 1.
- Leaders' actions have improved the attendance rates of disadvantaged pupils. The proportion of current disadvantaged pupils absent from school is the lowest it has been in four years. You have had a significant impact on reducing the number of disadvantaged pupils who are absent often.
- You have a clear understanding of the policies and procedures that ensure that children do not go missing from education and are kept safe. Last year, you kept a number of disadvantaged pupils on your registers because they had not successfully relocated or found a school. Published absence information for the last academic year will reflect this.

Next steps for the school

Leaders and those responsible for governance should ensure that:

- learning opportunities in the early years actively promote the development of children's speaking and listening, so that more children are ready to write in key stage 1
- an increasing proportion of children who are working at an emerging level at the end of the early years reach the expected standard in writing at the end of Year 2.

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

Yours sincerely

Mark Cole

Her Majesty's Inspector

Information about the inspection

I worked with you and senior leaders to look closely at:

- the progress that disadvantaged pupils and pupils who have special educational needs and/or disabilities make in phonics
- the impact you have had on improving writing outcomes for pupils in key stage 1, particularly those did not reach a good level of development at the end of the Reception Year
- how effective you are in identifying, planning for and raising standards for pupils who have special educational needs and/or disabilities in key stage 1
- the effectiveness of your safeguarding procedures and the culture of the school
- the impact you have had in improving the attendance of disadvantaged pupils.

I met with you, senior leaders and governors to review your evaluation of the school's effectiveness. I accompanied senior leaders to the early years and key stage 1 classes. We evaluated a range work in pupils' books and your assessment information. I met with the local authority. I looked at 43 responses on Parent View and spoke with parents. I checked the effectiveness of your safeguarding arrangements, including those related to recruitment.