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Emma Savage
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Dear Emma Savage

Short inspection of Southborough CofE Primary School

Following my visit to the school on 21 June 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 March 2014.

This school continues to be good.

The leadership team has maintained the good quality of education in the school since the last inspection. Together with your deputy, you have developed strong leadership systems across the school. You are rightly proud of the way that teachers and leaders use research and regularly work with other schools to refine ways of working. As a result, this is a 'thinking' school, in which reflection and development are integral parts of everyday life. Everyone is united with you in aspiring to the very best for the pupils of Southborough.

Governors are highly effective. They too are reflective. Recently, they have developed a monitoring system working in pairs to look at specific aspects of the school's work. This has helped them supplement their secure understanding of performance data. Governors have both a strategic overview and an understanding of the day-to-day life of the school. As a result, they have a good understanding of its strengths and needs, which enables them to effectively hold leaders to account.

Leaders have maintained the strengths identified at the previous inspection and have effectively tackled the identified areas for improvement. Standards and expectations are high in reading, writing and mathematics. Pupils attain well in relation to age-related expectations and at higher levels. Pupils, including disadvantaged pupils, make strong progress from their starting points. The curriculum offers a wide range of experiences which capture pupils' imagination. Artistic skills in particular are well developed. Beautiful artwork, demonstrating a range of skills, adorns the school. Specialist teachers are used effectively to provide

inspiring musical experiences such as the imminent opera performance. However, pupils' books do not reflect such well-developed skills and understanding in some other aspects of the curriculum.

Parents who I spoke to, or who completed the Ofsted survey, Parent View, were supportive of the school. The wide majority of those who responded were happy to recommend it. Parents value the information provided by the school and the frequent parents evenings. One parent summed up the views of many in writing: 'Great school. My child loves it here, loves the teachers and is thriving!'

Safeguarding is effective.

The leadership team has ensured that all safeguarding arrangements are fit for purpose. Following the opening of the new building in 2015, many procedures to ensure that pupils move safely around three buildings have needed to be revised and refined. Leaders have applied meticulous thought to this so that the school retains a sense of continuity for pupils. Safety was paramount throughout this process and is regularly reviewed.

All necessary checks are in place at the appointment of staff. All required training is completed. Record-keeping is meticulous. Processes have been reviewed by governors, who work effectively with school leaders to ensure that everything is as it should be.

All pupils and staff who completed the Ofsted survey felt that pupils were safe at school. Pupils told me how they learn about e-safety at school. They are excited to be sharing their knowledge about this with their parents through the pupil-led assemblies.

Inspection findings

- During the inspection, we looked closely together at mathematics provision across the school. In the 2017 end of Key Stage national assessment, most groups of pupils attained well when compared to national proportions. However, we wanted to look closely at the progress of disadvantaged pupils. School information and work in the books of current pupils across the school show that they are making strong progress from their starting points. Attainment across the school remains high.
- The mathematics leader has led effective professional development across the school to raise the level of challenge in mathematics teaching. This is reflected in both progress information and pupils' work in their books. Regular opportunities are provided for pupils to develop mathematical reasoning and extend problem-solving skills. As a result, pupils are confident and competent mathematicians.
- Pupils are using mathematics across the curriculum in gathering a range of data in their work in science. However, they are not yet consistently analysing or using these results to inform their written work.
- We also looked closely at the provision in early years, particularly for

disadvantaged pupils. Children settle quickly into school. Parents appreciate the information provided to them to support this process. During the inspection, we observed children enjoying the inviting outdoor area. They were involved in a wide range of learning experiences. For example, children were exploring symmetrical patterns using natural materials. Staff were highly skilled in supporting and extending thinking. School information and learning journals demonstrate strong progress from starting points for all groups of children, including the disadvantaged.

- We looked together at the wider curriculum provision across the school. This is an area which leaders have been developing. Pupils enjoy the rich opportunities offered by the curriculum. They told me how much they enjoy the trips, such as to the cathedral and to Madrid, and even camping on the field. The school's work to develop pupils' spiritual, moral, cultural and social education is well developed. These aspects form a rich, unifying thread across the school in keeping with your school ethos and vision.
- Curriculum leaders work effectively in teams and with locality partners. In some subjects, they have revised the curriculum to help ensure that pupils acquire the knowledge that they need. Pupils are starting to apply this knowledge to develop strong skills in some areas such as art and music. In other aspects of the technical and scientific curriculum, these skills are not yet fully developed in pupils' written work.
- Leaders are working in collaboration with their local partnership of schools to develop assessment procedures across the curriculum. This is in order to further strengthen the monitoring that takes place via book looks, lesson drop-ins and regular discussions with pupils.

Next steps for the school

Leaders and those responsible for governance should ensure that:

- pupils have systematic opportunities to demonstrate subject skills through their written work across the wider curriculum, particularly in scientific and technical aspects.

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 and your deputy, members of the governing body, staff, and representatives from the diocese and the local authority. 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 took account of parents' views in the playground in the morning, and considered 141 responses to Ofsted's online questionnaire, Parent View, including 58 free-text responses. I took account of 18 responses to the Ofsted pupil survey and 53 responses to the staff survey. I also considered one letter from a parent.