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Helen Castle
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Dear Mrs Castle

Short inspection of Wickham Church of England Primary School

Following my visit to the school on 31 January 2017, 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 December 2012.

This school continues to be good.

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

Since becoming headteacher in January 2015, you have built a leadership team with a strong capacity to drive further improvement. Governors and school leaders share your ambitious vision for the school. Governors provide effective support and challenge. They make frequent visits to the school and know how the policies they agree in meetings impact on everyday practice. School leaders know their role in school improvement and say they appreciate the sense of teamwork that you have created within the school.

Your calm and purposeful leadership has created a school in which there is a real community feel. Parents told me how much they value this. You worked well with the school community to create the school's values of love, courage and respect. These values permeate the school's work. Pupils behave well. They enjoy school and this is reflected in their good attendance.

Despite a great deal of staff change since the previous inspection, you have ensured that the school remains good. Your evaluation of the school is accurate and you understand the key issues it faces. You reflect carefully on how you could do things more effectively. You recognise that outcomes in mathematics in 2016 were lower than expected. In response, you have worked with the local authority to introduce

new approaches to developing pupils' ability to explain their reasoning in mathematics. These approaches are beginning to have an impact but are not yet embedded across the school.

You have worked successfully, in partnership with the local authority, to continue to improve the quality of teaching. Teachers value the support that you and your deputy headteacher provide. Teachers say that, through both formal observations of teaching as well as more informal 'drop-ins', you and your deputy headteacher give good, timely advice. However, although you recognise that teaching is typically good, you are aware of inconsistencies. You know that more needs to be done to make sure that good practice is shared across the school so that all teaching is of the high quality you expect.

Together with your deputy headteacher and inclusion leader, you keep a close eye on how well pupils are achieving. You have frequent meetings with teachers to discuss the learning of each pupil, especially those who are at risk of falling behind. In this way, you know that most pupils currently in school, including disadvantaged pupils and those from service families, are making good progress.

You have made sure that the areas for improvement in the school's previous inspection have been acted upon effectively. For example, the teaching of writing has improved. Most pupils present their work well and show pride in what they do. Pupils use an increasingly varied and interesting vocabulary and this is improving the quality of their writing. Good teaching of phonics in early years and Year 1 has meant that the proportion of pupils reaching the expected standard in the Year 1 phonics check has improved year-on-year. In 2016 this was 97%. The proportion of pupils who reached the expected standard in the Year 2 reading assessments in 2016 was 87%, which was well above the national average. Even so, those few pupils who struggle with early reading are given good support and so catch up quickly. Your focus on improving pupils' spelling skills is reaping rewards, with improving results in the Year 6 national spelling test. Although pupils have good opportunities to use their mathematical skills in other subjects, you know there is still more to do to help pupils to explain their working in mathematics.

The previous inspection also asked that you continue to improve teaching. You have done so. A clear example of this is the marked improvement in the quality of teaching in early years. In 2016, the proportion of children who reached a good level of development rose from 52% in 2015 to 82%. This was the result of the effective support that you provided to raise the quality of provision in Reception.

Safeguarding is effective.

The importance of keeping pupils safe is seen, rightly, as a top priority. The leadership team has ensured that all safeguarding arrangements are fit for purpose and records are detailed and of high quality. Rigorous checks are made on new staff. All staff receive annual training as well as frequent updates to make sure they know the latest information. Teachers told me that they were reminded in the most recent training about how to 'whistle-blow'.

Staff know the pupils well. Relationships are strong across the school. Pupils told me that there is always an adult to turn to if they are worried. Annual e-safety and anti-bullying weeks help to highlight key aspects of safeguarding. The messages these give to pupils are reinforced frequently through the school's collective worship and reminders, for example, when using search engines in computing lessons. Pupils help to share these important messages. For example, during a recent act of collective worship, the school council presented information about how pupils can keep themselves safe. Pupils learn how to keep safe by water when on school trips to the local river or seaside. All pupils learn to swim by the time they leave Year 6.

School leaders keep a close eye on attendance. Pupils whose attendance lags behind are well supported by the headteacher, inclusion manager and the emotional literacy support assistant. As a result, their attendance usually improves.

Inspection findings

- Pupils' progress in reading was uncharacteristically low by the end of Year 6 in 2016. You were disappointed and lost no time in responding. School leaders carefully analysed the reasons and recognised that pupils were not prepared sufficiently for the higher expectations of the new curriculum.
- You made good use of the support from the local authority to introduce teaching strategies to restore the good progress which pupils had made in previous years. Different, more challenging books have been introduced across the school to help pupils to develop the reading stamina they need to tackle longer texts. Books have been chosen to appeal to both boys and girls, for example 'Treasure Island' in Year 5.
- You have made sure that teaching now focuses even more on enabling pupils to 'read between the lines' so that they become able to infer meaning from the text. This is beginning to have a positive impact. School information shows that current pupils, including disadvantaged pupils, make good progress in reading. Recent assessments indicate that nearly 80% of Year 6 pupils are working at the expected standard in reading with about 20% working at the higher levels.
- As with reading, you were disappointed with the 2016 key stage 2 results in mathematics. You know that pupils, while stronger in their calculation skills, were less able to reason, explain and justify their answers, all of which are skills needed to be successful in the new mathematics curriculum.
- You have made sure teachers have received training and support to improve the teaching of mathematical reasoning. The impact of this is beginning to show in pupils' workbooks. In key stage 1, for example, we saw pupils able to explain why doubling an even number never results in an odd number.
- School information shows that pupils' achievement, including that of disadvantaged pupils, in mathematics, is improving across the school. An increasing proportion of pupils are working at age-related expectations. However, pupils' ability to reason mathematically remains underdeveloped across the school. This is why you have made it a key focus for the coming year.

- During our initial discussions you told me that most of the teachers currently in school joined since the previous inspection. You recruited four teachers in September 2016. We decided that the induction arrangements for new staff should be a key line of enquiry for the inspection.
- A very few of the parents I spoke to during the inspection or who responded to Ofsted's online survey were concerned about the changes in staffing. However, you have managed these changes well. Induction arrangements for new staff are strong.
- Staff receive good information about what is expected of them, including in relation to safeguarding. The four new teachers I met during the inspection told me they received high quality support from you, your deputy headteacher and from other staff. They told me that this is a very supportive school in which to work and develop their practice. They appreciate the coaching they receive, which focuses on their specific needs.
- All staff who responded to the online survey agree that leaders use professional development to encourage, challenge and support them. This helps to ensure that, despite staff turnover, the quality of the school's provision remains good.

Next steps for the school

Leaders and those responsible for governance should ensure that:

- good practice is shared across the school so that all teaching is of a consistently high quality
- teaching improves pupils' ability to explain and justify their answers in mathematics.

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

Yours sincerely

Joanna Toulson
Ofsted Inspector

Information about the inspection

I met with you, your deputy headteacher, staff new to the school and representatives of the governing body. I also met with a representative of the local authority. You and I spent most of the morning in classrooms, observing teaching and learning, talking to pupils and looking at their work. I took account of the 43 responses by parents, and 13 staff responses to Ofsted's online survey. I also spoke

to several parents at the start and end of the school day. I looked at a range of documentation, including information about pupils' progress and records relating to safeguarding.