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Piccadilly Gate
Store Street
Manchester
M1 2WD

T 0300 123 4234
www.gov.uk/ofsted



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Mrs Holley Hunt
Headteacher
Snodland CofE Primary School
Roberts Road
Snodland
Kent
ME6 5HL

Dear Mrs Hunt

Short inspection of Snodland Church of England Primary School

Following my visit to the school on 14 March 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 October 2012.

This school continues to be good.

The leadership team has maintained the good quality of education in the school since the last inspection. Pupils achieve well across the school in a range of subjects. Outcomes at the end of the early years and key stages 1 and 2 are at or above national figures. Results of the Year 1 phonics screening check are also above national expectations.

The changes that you have made to the structure and development of your leadership team have ensured that raising standards for all groups of pupils, including disadvantaged pupils, is a clear priority. You have a very clear vision for the school and you are making rapid and necessary changes. You, along with your leadership team and governors, fully understand the areas for development within the school. You have appropriate strategic plans and current actions in place to address and improve them.

You and your staff have developed an ethos and culture of nurturing throughout the school and this extends to support for families where needed. As one parent commented, 'This is a lovely school with a great support network for parents who may need it.' The strong Christian ethos is evident in all aspects of school life and one pupil described it as, 'the best thing about this school'.

Around the school and in classrooms, pupils behave well, care about each other and feel safe. All pupils are engaged and interested in their learning and are making good progress as a result. They are polite and friendly, and enjoy talking about their

learning. Pupils are rightly proud of their school and their learning. Across the school, pupils hold a variety of roles with responsibility. These include environment enhancers, eco warriors, anti-bullying ambassadors, playground buddies and mediators, play leaders, and leading lights – who help to plan and lead collective worship. Pupils have helpful opportunities to shape the direction of the school, including when governors take account of the school council's annual reports to them.

The vast majority of parents who responded to Parent View were extremely positive about the school and would recommend it to others. A parent commented that, 'This is a fabulous school, with the children's teaching and learning at its core.' Parents feel involved in school life and well-informed about developments and changes.

You and your leadership team have developed a suitable tracking system that allows you to see how well pupils, and groups of pupils, are making progress in their learning. This enables your whole staff team to monitor and understand the impact that the interventions they provide have on pupils' progress, to make any necessary adjustments and to plan for pupils' next steps in learning. Furthermore, the information that this monitoring provides allows governors and leaders to ask pertinent questions about what more could be achieved.

At the time of the previous inspection, leaders were asked to develop writing across the school. Improvement is evident. This has been achieved through several initiatives and has been highly successful as outcomes for writing across the school, including in the early years, are above national figures. Leaders recognise that mathematics now needs to become a focus as outcomes have dipped over recent years. Relevant work has already started and appropriate support is in place to raise pupils' attainment in mathematics. The impact of this work is already being seen through accelerated pupils' progress in this subject and your actions must continue to ensure that this is sustained.

Staff are overwhelmingly positive about the school and are proud to work here. Development and training for all staff is a strength. Your recent restructuring of the leadership team was designed to provide succession planning for the school. This has resulted in a much wider distribution of knowledge and responsibilities. However, these new middle leaders need time to further develop their skills and understanding.

Safeguarding is effective.

The leadership team has ensured that all safeguarding arrangements are fit for purpose and records are detailed and of high quality. Staff have an up-to-date knowledge of current safeguarding requirements and have received recent training. They are vigilant about the risks posed to children and know how to report any concerns they may have.

Pupils' well-being is central to the life of the school. Helpfully, visitors and staff are reminded about the school's safeguarding statement upon arrival at the school. This ensures that all are mindful of their responsibilities.

Leaders work closely with families to support any pupil whose circumstances make them vulnerable. Your focused work on addressing absence rates for some groups of pupils is beginning to have impact. The introduction of a breakfast club for invited pupils has ensured that this group are more regularly in school on time.

Pupils across the school have learned about what bullying is and know what to do if they ever feel worried or concerned about their own safety, or that of others. They know that they can talk to an anti-bullying ambassador or a peer mediator as well as to adults at the school. Pupils report that bullying rarely happens and are confident that adults in the school deal effectively with these rare occurrences. You ensure that e-safety is given a high profile and leaders ensure that parents are aware of how to keep their children safe online.

Inspection findings

- During this inspection, I focused particularly on the following aspects of the school: the effectiveness of the school's work to keep pupils safe; how well current pupils achieve and make progress, particularly in mathematics across the school and reading in key stage 1; how leaders ensure that outcomes for disadvantaged pupils are improving; how effective leaders are in developing teaching and learning; and the effectiveness of governance.
- Leaders are very clear about the measures needed to raise standards in mathematics. The current focus on developing pupils' mastery skills and their vocabulary for oral reasoning is appropriate. There is a high level of helpful consistency in the delivery and recording of mathematical learning across the school.
- In the teaching of phonics, teachers ensure that tasks are well matched to pupils' starting points. As a result, pupils make good progress. Disadvantaged pupils are supported well in their acquisition of early reading skills. Reading has a high priority, so that pupils enjoy reading and have access to a wide variety of books. All pupils are expected to read daily and those who do not read regularly at home are supported effectively in school. This is helpful. Your restructuring of the teaching of guided reading has ensured that pupils' skills are developed more securely. The links between home and school are strong and parents respond well to the reading tasks which they are asked to support.
- Disadvantaged pupils are confident to talk about their learning and show a real pride in their achievements. A wide range of helpful interventions is in place to ensure that the recent accelerated progress made by disadvantaged pupils is sustained. Helpfully, the leader who focuses on improving outcomes for disadvantaged pupils and the nominated governor work effectively together. They closely monitor and evaluate the impact of interventions on pupils' progress. As a result, the gaps in achievement between disadvantaged pupils and other pupils nationally are beginning to narrow.

- You ensure that the quality of teaching and learning is regularly monitored. Staff are supported well through a strong programme of professional development and mentoring. Importantly, performance management for staff is closely linked to pupils' outcomes and to curriculum development. The distribution of leadership is a strength of the school, with many leaders having a deep and thorough knowledge of their area of responsibility. Leadership is supported well by the local authority, whose officers have a good understanding of the needs of the school.
- Governors know and understand the school well. They challenge school leaders robustly and monitor the school's performance effectively. They plan strategically to ensure that the school continues to flourish.

Next steps for the school

Leaders and those responsible for governance should ensure that:

- leaders continue to develop their skills and expertise
- targeted and effective use of pupil premium funding continues to raise standards for disadvantaged pupils, to diminish any differences between their achievement and that of other pupils
- leaders monitor improvements to teaching and learning in mathematics, to evaluate the impact on pupils' outcomes and identify next steps.

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

Yours sincerely

Marcia Goodwin
Ofsted Inspector

Information about the inspection

During the inspection, I met with you, the deputy headteacher, members of the senior leadership team and the inclusion manager. I met with four governors, including the chair of the governing body. I also met with a local authority representative. Together with you and the deputy headteacher, I visited 13 classes. During these observations, and also separately, I talked with pupils about their learning and looked at the work in their books. I also talked to pupils at breaktime. I reviewed a range of pupils' workbooks and listened to two pupils read. I spoke to parents at the beginning of the day. I took account of 46 responses to Ofsted's online Parent View questionnaire and one email from a parent, 34 responses from

members of staff, and 98 responses from pupils, to Ofsted's questionnaires. I reviewed the school's website and sampled a range of documents, including leaders' evaluation of the school's effectiveness, the school's development plan and documents relating to safeguarding. I also looked at information about pupils' learning and progress, and records relating to safeguarding, exclusions and attendance.