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Elizabeth Mitchell
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Dear Mrs Mitchell

Short inspection of Seal Church of England Voluntary Controlled 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 October 2011.

This school continues to be good.

The leadership team has maintained the good quality of education in the school since the last inspection. You have clear ambition for your school and this is recognised and valued by staff. Parents are overwhelmingly supportive of the school and recognise the positive impact you have had since becoming the headteacher. Leaders have a very clear and accurate view of what the school does well. You look closely at the progress that groups of pupils are making and consistently identify what could be even better. The plans you have to improve the school further are clear because you are explicit about what success will look like.

The curriculum you provide pupils is a significant strength. Pupils are given a wide range of exciting learning opportunities that capture their imaginations and stimulate them. Parents recognise the impact the curriculum is having on their children's progress. As one parent notes, 'She is making great progress academically and socially, she enjoys going and is excited about learning.' Home learning is integral to your curriculum and pupils are proud of the work they bring into school to share. The quality of pupils' artwork in key stage 2 is breathtaking. Pupils are systematically taught a range of skills over time and then apply these in their work.

Governors know their school. They use their time in school to talk with pupils and staff to get first-hand information about what is working well and what could be even better. Governors use what they know to challenge leaders effectively.

At the previous inspection, the good start that children get in the early years and the standards that pupils achieved were identified as strengths. You have maintained these. The proportion of children, including those who are disadvantaged, who achieve a good level of development at the end of the early years is consistently above those found nationally. Over time, the proportion of pupils reaching the expected standards at the end of key stage 1 and key stage 2 have been above those found nationally. However, your detailed tracking of current pupils' progress highlights that girls are making slightly more progress in their writing than boys.

At the previous inspection, you were asked to improve pupils' writing and the attendance levels of pupils. In 2016, at the end of key stage 2, pupils had made significant progress in their writing from their key stage 1 starting points. Consequently, the proportion of pupils working at the expected standard and at greater depth were higher than those found nationally. Attendance levels are beginning to improve for current pupils but you have rightly identified that these improvements need to be sustained.

Safeguarding is effective.

The leadership team has ensured that all safeguarding arrangements are fit for purpose. Referrals to other professionals are swift because records are detailed and of high quality. Leaders know and use local agreements for when pupils are moving between schools, ensuring that pupils do not go missing from education. Governors closely monitor the work of school leaders to keep pupils safe because they have an 'it could happen here' philosophy that underpins their work. The overall culture in the school gives safeguarding the highest priority. Pupils feel safe and know they have adults in school who will listen and help.

Inspection findings

- During this inspection, I looked at: pupils' personal development; the progress that boys are making in key stage 1; the progress pupils who did not meet the expected standards at the end of key stage 1 are making in key stage 2; the impact of leaders' work on improving attendance.
- The personal development of pupils is a priority for leaders. All staff develop pupils' personal and social skills very well. The youngest children get off to a good start in the Reception Year as they develop good turn-taking and collaboration skills. Vulnerable pupils are well supported. Relationships between adults and pupils are warm and respectful. Adults have high expectations and convey these in a way that is both sensitive and clear. Pupils are given valuable learning experiences outside. As a result, pupils are given opportunities to take safe risks, work together on large collaborative tasks and develop their resilience and perseverance. The school's active promotion and teaching of cycling has enabled many pupils to learn to ride a bicycle.
- The Christian values of the school are known and understood by pupils. Pupils

are clear about their rights and their responsibilities both within the school and in wider society. As a result, pupils are very well prepared for life in modern Britain. Pupils take huge pride in their work. They are instantly able to recall key facts they have learned over time because the learning experiences the school provides leave a lasting impression on pupils.

- Boys in the early years make good progress. Leaders and staff have thought carefully about the resources and experiences offered to boys to promote early writing. Consequently, boys are confident to use their knowledge about letters and the sounds they make to try and write unfamiliar words. Staff have created a 'have a go' mentality in the youngest boys. Boys make good progress in key stage 1. Planned learning takes account of boys' different starting points, including those who are not yet working within age-related expectations. Teachers know pupils very well and use other adults to effectively support boys in developing the skills, knowledge and vocabulary needed to catch up. However, leaders know that, across the school, girls are making even more progress than boys in writing.
- Pupils in key stage 2 who were not working at the expected standards at the end of key stage 1 make good progress, including those pupils who have special educational needs and/or disabilities. Pupils make good progress in their writing because opportunities to use and apply what they have been taught are rich and varied across the curriculum. Pupils develop good mathematical reasoning skills when they are given real-life problems to solve.
- The attendance levels of current pupils are improving, including those who are disadvantaged. You have improved administrative systems to support the detailed tracking of lateness and absence and developed new reward systems for those with the best attendance.

Next steps for the school

Leaders and those responsible for governance should ensure that:

- recent improvements in the attendance levels of all pupils, including those who are disadvantaged, are sustained
- boys make even more progress in their writing.

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

Mark Cole
Her Majesty's Inspector

Information about the inspection

I met with senior leaders to review your evaluation of the school's effectiveness. I accompanied senior leaders to classrooms. We evaluated a range of work in pupils' books and your assessment information. I spoke to pupils around the school, during a meeting and looked at 28 pupil questionnaires. I met with governors. I looked at 33 responses to the online questionnaire, Parent View, and 15 staff survey returns. I checked the effectiveness of your safeguarding arrangements, including those related to recruitment.