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Ms Tara Hewett
Acting Head of School
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Dear Ms Hewett

Short inspection of Shorne Church of England Primary School

Following my visit to the school on 3 October 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 your predecessor 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.

You took on the role of acting headteacher in the absence of the substantive headteacher in January 2017. In September 2017, you became the acting head of school, supported by an executive headteacher from the trust. During that time you have worked with determination to make sure that the school provides a good standard of education for its pupils.

You work in close partnership with the executive headteacher and, together, you make a very effective team. You both have an accurate understanding of the strengths of the school and know what needs to be done to bring about further improvement.

You receive good-quality support from the trust. You appreciate being part of a group of schools who share their expertise. You are continuing to share best practice in teaching within the school and from across the trust. The capacity to improve the school still further is clear to see.

The newly reconstituted governing body provides effective challenge and support. Governors provide a clear sense of direction during a period of changes in leadership. They make frequent visits to the school to see the impact of policies on

everyday practice. Each governor is responsible for particular aspects of the school's work and they all keep a close eye on how well these are going.

While the large majority of parents who responded to Ofsted's online survey feel the school is well led and managed, a small minority disagree. However, the inspection found that, despite the recent turbulence in leadership, you have been successful in re-energising the school, sharing your high ambitions and expectations with governors, staff and pupils. You lead a happy school in which pupils are keen to learn.

Parents told me that they like the 'family feel' of the school and the overwhelming majority said that their children were happy at school. One parent typified the views of many, saying, 'I know they are safe and happy here.' Several parents of children in the Reception class said how pleased they were with how quickly their child had settled into school life. One parent said, 'I can't believe how well the staff already know my daughter. She is already making progress in her learning.'

Pupils are enthusiastic about the opportunities that the school provides. They talk animatedly about the exciting activities and educational visits. Pupils told me that learning is fun. They particularly enjoy computing, sports and art. Many spoke about how they benefit from the wide range of clubs that enrich the curriculum. Pupils' success in a recent sports tournament was an achievement about which they spoke proudly. Girls told me they enjoyed being part of the girls' football team. Pupils were unanimous that they enjoy being part of Shorne Primary School.

This is a caring, nurturing school. Pupils behave well in lessons and on the playground. They want to work hard and are keen to please their teachers. Pupils are, quite rightly, proud of their school.

Although the areas identified for improvement related to the predecessor school, we discussed how you have maintained the strengths and tackled the weaknesses. For example, we discussed the improvements you have made in raising standards in mathematics across the school. You told me about the effective training that staff have received, both from yourself and the specialist from the trust, to improve the teaching of mathematics. You explained how you have overhauled the school's approach and introduced new resources. The impact of this is clear to see. Work in pupils' books shows that pupils develop secure basic skills and have lots of good opportunities to explain their reasoning and so deepen their understanding of mathematical concepts. Unvalidated information shows that in 2017, the proportions of pupils in Year 6 who reached the expected and higher standards in mathematics rose markedly from 2016 to being above the national average.

You explained to me that in order to improve pupils' interest in their learning, you have introduced a new curriculum. We agreed that this is providing pupils with a broad range of exciting activities. You recognise, however, that although skills are built on progressively in reading, writing and mathematics, this is not always the case for other subjects.

Teaching, overall, is good. Classrooms are bright and inviting and have prompts on the walls to which pupils refer when writing or solving problems in mathematics. Teachers usually plan lessons carefully and effectively. However, there are times when teachers do not use the information they have about pupils to plan work which will move them on quickly and securely. This means that misconceptions are not picked up rapidly. There is more to be done to make sure that activities are appropriately challenging for all pupils, especially the most able, to make sure that all pupils reach the highest standards of which they are capable. You are aware of this, and ongoing support to improve the quality of teaching further remains a priority.

Current pupils, including disadvantaged pupils, are making good progress in reading, writing and mathematics. After a dip in 2016, you have made sure that standards have returned to their previous higher level. Recent, provisional assessment information for 2017 demonstrates that Year 6 pupils made good progress and were prepared well for secondary school. However, you recognise that standards can improve still further so that your high ambitions for all pupils are achieved.

Safeguarding is effective.

You have ensured that safeguarding is effective. Staff receive timely training and frequent reminders to make sure they are kept fully up to date about how to keep pupils safe.

The overwhelming majority of parents confirm that the school is a safe place and that their children are looked after well. Parents told me they appreciated staff being available at the school gate in the morning and at the end of the day. This gives parents the opportunity to talk to staff about any worries they may have.

You are not complacent about pupils' safety. You take every opportunity to make sure that arrangements to keep pupils safe are secure. For example, you have recently improved the arrangements for parents who are late collecting their child at the end of the day. The leader for safeguarding from the trust is working with you to make sure that the effective systems you have in place are maintained at the highest level possible.

Pupils are adamant that this is a safe school. They told me that there is always an adult to talk to about any concerns. Pupils know how to keep themselves safe, for example when using the internet.

You have done much to improve pupils' attendance. A range of strategies, including rewarding 100% attendance and giving frequent reminders to parents in newsletters, has been successful in reducing absence for all groups of pupils, in particular for disadvantaged pupils.

Inspection findings

- During the inspection, we focused on how well disadvantaged pupils achieve. We also evaluated how well the revised curriculum promoted learning across a range of subjects. Lastly, we evaluated how well the teaching of reading was enabling pupils to make effective progress.
- The achievement of disadvantaged pupils is improving as leaders continue to make the progress of this group of pupils a priority. You track carefully the progress made by disadvantaged pupils. Additional support is provided where needed. Overall, disadvantaged pupils make good progress and leaders have robust plans in place to make sure the achievement of disadvantaged pupils continues to improve.
- Pupils told me they enjoyed the topics in the revised curriculum. They said this made learning fun. For example, they enjoyed identifying which soil comes from Mars and making telephones with cups and string. Teachers make good links with English and mathematics and this is supporting pupils' good progress in these subjects.
- Although learning is exciting and memorable, there are times when the precise skill to be learned in the wider curriculum, for example in geography and science, is not clear. Pupils can describe the activity but are too often unsure about what they are learning. This means that pupils are not reaching the highest standards of which they are capable.
- You have successfully promoted reading across the school. Pupils told me that they enjoy the new system in which they receive stars for correctly completing a task which tests their understanding of books. They are excited about the prospect of earning a certificate for receiving the most stars in their class.
- Pupils can talk about the books they are reading at home and at school. The class books, such as 'Goodnight Mr Tom' in Year 6, are appropriately challenging. Phonics is taught well. The library is well stocked and pupils say they enjoy borrowing the books to read at home. The new strategy for developing pupils' comprehension is well received by pupils and already improving their understanding of what they read.

Next steps for the school

Leaders and those responsible for governance should ensure that:

- teachers use assessment information precisely to plan for more rapid progress of all pupils, especially the most able pupils
- the wider curriculum enables pupils to achieve the highest standards in all subjects.

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

Joanna Toulson
Ofsted Inspector

Information about the inspection

I met with you, the executive headteacher, the chair of the governing body and the chief executive officer of the trust. I spent most of the day in classrooms, observing teaching and learning, talking to pupils and looking at their work. Most of this time was spent jointly with you or the executive headteacher. I met with a group of pupils to talk about their learning and to capture their views of school life. I took account of the 65 responses by parents to Ofsted's online survey. I also spoke to several parents at the start of the school day. I looked at a range of documentation, including an evaluation of the school's effectiveness, the school's single central record of staff recruitment checks, records of pupils' behaviour, attendance information and minutes of governing body meetings.