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27 November 2018

Miss Jane Mallon
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Dear Miss Mallon

Short inspection of Brenchley and Matfield Church of England Primary School

Following my visit to the school on 15 November 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 November 2013.

This school continues to be good.

The leadership team has maintained the good quality of education in the school since the previous inspection. You have an ambitious vision and strong commitment to ensuring that pupils receive a well-rounded education. With the executive headteacher, you have carefully considered the best staffing structure and curriculum that will deliver this. Effective professional development is central to building this vision. You work effectively both within the trust, the locality and beyond to ensure that leaders and teachers continue to develop the skills they need to deliver your aspirations for the pupils. There have been several changes in staffing, including in leadership roles, and you consistently invest the time and resources needed to support staff development. As a result, staff are confident, morale is high and the actions you are taking to drive forward the school are having a positive impact.

Pupils enjoy coming to school. Attendance levels are high. They value their education and the supportive relationships they build both with adults and their peers. Pupils explained how they are supported to make progress, telling me, 'The learning is good, it really helps your confidence.' Their confidence is further developed through the wide range of clubs on offer, and opportunities to represent the school in musical and sporting activities, which are available for everyone.

During the inspection this focus on equality of opportunity was evident throughout the school. Pupils who have additional needs are supported in an individualised and

creative way which ensures that they get what they need to make progress and grow in confidence. Parents value the family feel of the school and the way in which their children's happiness and well-being are of central importance. Parents responding to the Ofsted survey, Parent View, repeatedly highlighted how happy their children were at school. Comments such as, 'Not a day has gone past when they haven't gone in happy to be going to school' were typical of those received. One parent encapsulated the views of many, saying, 'We are thrilled with the school.'

You have maintained the strengths identified at the previous inspection. Spiritual, moral, social and cultural education is at the heart of everything that happens in school. This is evident both in the displays and in the behaviour of pupils. Pupils are kind to each other and learn well together. They are well mannered and engaging. Pupils achieve well. In the 2018 national end-of-key-stage assessments in Year 6, the proportions of pupils who attained the expected standards in reading, writing and mathematics were similar to the national average.

You have addressed the previous inspection issues. A focus on developing mathematics teaching has resulted in more problem-solving activities and opportunities for pupils to apply their knowledge. There remains some variability in levels of challenge for the most able mathematicians across the school. However, school information and work in pupils' books demonstrate that progress is becoming stronger.

Provision for the most able pupils is variable. Where it is most effective pupils can talk about their favourite authors and problem-solving strategies in mathematics with confidence and knowledge. Where it is less well developed, such as in writing in some year groups, the most able pupils do not have enough opportunities to write at length. Pupils do not systematically transfer what they are learning in their spelling, punctuation and grammar sessions to their written work.

Safeguarding is effective.

The leadership team has ensured that all safeguarding arrangements are fit for purpose. All necessary checks are in place when staff are appointed. All required training is completed. Processes have been reviewed by governors, who work effectively with school leaders to ensure that everything is as it should be.

All parents who completed the Ofsted survey felt that pupils were safe at school. Pupils told me that they feel safe and trust in adults to keep them safe. They have regular opportunities to learn about how to keep themselves safe, for example through e-safety lessons.

Inspection findings

- During the inspection we looked closely together at the provision for the most able pupils. In the 2018 national assessments at the end of Year 6, the proportion of pupils who attained at the higher standard was below the national

average. Where provision is most effective, the most able pupils develop their reading skills well. Pupils in key stage 1 are able to make well-informed choices about their reading. For example, pupils were able to explain why they liked the wide range of Anthony Browne books they had read and what characterised him as an author. For some of the most able pupils this strength in reading is transferred to their writing. Where this is the case, pupils produce some evocative well-crafted writing using well-chosen vocabulary.

- However, there remains variability in provision for the most able pupils. In some year groups teachers' questioning does not systematically stretch pupils and tasks do not meet pupils' individual needs. Some books show that pupils do not do enough writing to develop their skills and that teachers' expectations of spelling, punctuation and grammar are not consistently high enough.
- We also looked at the provision for mathematics across the school. Both school information and work in books indicate that pupils' progress in mathematics is improving. Pupils enjoy mathematics, and there are some opportunities, notably in science, for them to apply their learning across the curriculum. Nevertheless, there are still some occasions when the most able pupils are not provided with enough challenge.
- The mathematics leader has developed a comprehensive action plan based on a range of analysis. She has used this to commission and deliver effective training for staff. As a result, staff are planning increased opportunities for pupils to explain and develop their mathematical thinking. Pupils told me that the opportunities to solve mathematical problems had increased and that this change had increased their confidence and supported their learning.
- We also looked at the standards of spelling, punctuation and grammar across the school. In the 2018 national assessments at the end of Year 6, the proportion of pupils who attained the expected standard was below the national average. Current standards of spelling, punctuation and grammar across the school are variable. Where expectations are high, pupils are taking responsibility for editing their work and are using their skills well. Pupils are now having specific spelling, punctuation and grammar lessons. However, pupils are not applying the punctuation rules they have learned consistently well enough. There are occasions where the basic skills of punctuation are not used in the writing of the most able pupils.

Next steps for the school

Leaders and those responsible for governance should ensure that:

- teachers further raise their expectations of pupils, particularly the most able, so that pupils are more appropriately challenged
- pupils have more opportunities to write, both regularly and at length
- pupils consistently apply their knowledge of spelling, punctuation and grammar to their written work.

I am copying this letter to the chair of the governing body and the chief executive officer of the multi-academy trust, 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

During the inspection, I met regularly with you and also with members of the governing body, the trust and with staff. I reviewed documentation including information about pupils' achievement, the school improvement plan, and safeguarding checks, policies and procedures. Together, we visited classes across the school. In lessons, I observed pupils learning, looked at their books, heard them read and spoke to pupils about their work. I had a meeting with pupils to gather their views of the school. I took into account the views of parents I met on the playground. You provided me with school survey information and I also considered 57 responses to Ofsted's online questionnaire, Parent View, including 57 free-text responses.