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Martin Hacker
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Dear Mr Hacker

Short inspection of Brookland Church of England Primary School

Following my visit to the school on 22 November 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 April 2013.

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 a clear vision for the school, which promotes pupils' well-being, within a caring community, based on Christian values. A strong culture of nurture and support permeates the school. Staff appreciate your commitment to their professional development and are benefiting from the training they receive. All the staff who completed Ofsted's online survey feel proud to work at the school. Similarly, pupils reported a great sense of 'belonging' and are proud to be 'Brookland's pupils'.

An overwhelming majority of parents who responded to Ofsted's online questionnaire would recommend the school to others. Many parents commented positively about how approachable and friendly the staff are, and how well staff know the children. One parent spoke for many when she said that she 'couldn't be happier' with the school. Pupils said how much they enjoy being at school and that they feel safe and secure. A relatively high proportion of pupils join the school into year groups other than Reception Year. Pupils who join the school at different times are warmly welcomed and settle quickly. Parents of these pupils are delighted by the progress their children are now making.

The atmosphere around the school is purposeful, and routines are well established. Strong relationships between adults and pupils, and between pupils, enhance learning. An ethos of mutual respect and consideration for others is evident. During

my visits to classrooms, pupils were engaged by their learning, and their conduct was good. Delightful wall displays enrich the learning environment.

Senior leaders are well aware of the strengths of the school and those aspects which could be even better. Your self-evaluation is thorough and this leads to a sensible number of priorities for improvement in the school's development plan. Where you identify dips in standards, you instigate thoughtful actions. For example, having worked hard to improve reasoning in mathematics, leaders identified that pupils needed more practice in the basic mathematical skills, such as multiplication. Teaching has been adjusted accordingly. During the last academic year, leaders set out to improve pupils' spelling, punctuation and grammar. In line with the school's policy, pupils consistently correct spellings and grammatical mistakes in response to teachers' feedback in the writing books. Alongside initiatives such as a boys' writing group, there are positive signs of improvement, but leaders know that there is more to do.

Governors are committed to further improvement and know the school well. They visit regularly, and their monitoring provides them with sufficient knowledge and understanding to challenge school leaders. You and your team welcome helpful external advice from the local authority. You have provided high-quality training for teachers and teaching assistants, and are continuing with this work so that teaching improves further. Collaboration with other local schools provides you and your team with ideas. Conversely, your leadership and the school's practice in a number of areas are increasingly used as good examples for others.

Results at the end of key stage 2 in 2016 and provisional results for 2017 show that the proportion of pupils reaching the expected standard in reading, writing and mathematics combined is well above the national average. However, in both 2016 and 2017, the progress made by pupils from the end of key stage 1 to the end of key stage 2 in writing and mathematics was average. Overall progress scores are limited by the relatively weaker progress made by the most able pupils. Stretching and challenging the most able, including the most able disadvantaged pupils, is rightly a top priority for the school. The previous inspection report asked the school to make sure that pupils capable of harder work should start at more difficult levels than other pupils. Teaching still does not demonstrate this consistently.

You have taken effective action to address other areas for improvement identified at the previous inspection. For example, the outdoor provision for the Reception class has been developed very well. It promotes children's active learning, risk taking, independence and confidence effectively. Children get off to a strong start when they join the Reception Year, and the proportion of children who reach a good level of development consistently exceeds national levels. Children's sound grasp of phonics, acquired during the Reception Year, is developed further through key stage 1 and, in 2017, all of the pupils in Year 1 met the phonics screening check standard.

Pupils' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development is promoted very well throughout the school, supported by Christian values and embracing other faiths. Pupils and parents appreciate the range of extra-curricular activities and fascinating

trips, which enliven learning. However, governors and leaders acknowledge that the wider curriculum needs strengthening in order to make it of consistently high quality. Teachers' expectations are not always high in subjects other than English and mathematics, and this is limiting pupils' progress, especially that of the most able.

Safeguarding is effective.

The safety and well-being of pupils are high priorities at Brookland School. School leaders and governors have ensured that safeguarding arrangements are fit for purpose and records are detailed and of a high quality. Staff are alert to concerns about pupils because they know them so well. This vigilance ensures that concerns are referred to external agencies in a timely manner and scrupulously followed up. The work of the family support adviser, together with before- and after-school provision for pupils, helps to develop close links with families. The school's work with external agencies is effective in supporting vulnerable pupils.

Pupils, staff and parents are confident that school is a safe place. Incidents of bullying are rare and pupils feel confident in talking to adults about anything that is worrying them. Pupils spoke maturely about the guidance given to them by the headteacher, and about how his advice enables them to solve friendship problems independently.

Inspection findings

- During this inspection, I considered how well leaders are using pupil premium funding to ensure that disadvantaged pupils make best progress from their starting points. The school's information and published results show that disadvantaged pupils make strong progress. The special educational needs co-ordinator (SENCo), who has oversight of disadvantaged pupils, shows a deep understanding of the different barriers that individual pupils have to overcome. She ensures that the extra funding to support them is used to promote their well-being and learning effectively.
- The SENCo also identifies precisely the needs of pupils who have special educational needs (SEN) and/or disabilities. She then organises well-targeted interventions, often led by skilled teaching assistants, to support a particular learning difficulty, or emotional or practical need. Play therapy is often used successfully. The impact of these interventions is monitored very carefully by the SENCo. Pupils who have SEN and/or disabilities make good progress.
- I also considered what steps leaders have taken to improve the performance of the most able pupils by the end of key stage 2. Work in books showed that tasks set in lessons across the curriculum are not consistently pitched high enough to meet the individual needs of these pupils. This means that they do not make the progress of which they are capable.
- I looked at how effectively leaders ensure that the curriculum is broad and balanced and prepares pupils well for their next steps. Leaders and teachers are keen that pupils should have meaningful real-life learning experiences. The

planning, delivery and monitoring of these experiences do not yet show the same consistent attention to stretch and challenge pupils in subjects other than English and mathematics as in these two subjects. Work in pupils' books shows limited evidence of the progression of skills in a range of subjects across the curriculum.

- I considered how effectively governors undertake their responsibilities and hold school leaders to account. Governors are ambitious for the pupils in the school and strongly supportive of the leadership team. They are proud of the school's values, and one governor explained, 'It's cool to be smart at Brookland.' Although governors show that they challenge leaders about the performance of the most able, they do not always focus sharply enough on how well this group of pupils are progressing from their starting points.

Next steps for the school

Leaders and those responsible for governance should ensure that:

- the most able pupils make better progress in reading, writing and mathematics by the end of key stage 2
- teaching provides greater challenge for pupils across the curriculum, particularly for the most able.

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

Yours sincerely

Theresa Phillips
Her Majesty's Inspector

Information about the inspection

I met with you, your SENCo, and the chair and vice-chair of the governing body. I also met with a representative from the local authority. Together, you and I visited all classrooms and observed pupils' learning. I met with nine pupils, spoke informally to pupils from Year 1 to Year 6 at breaktime and took into account 28 responses to the online pupil survey. I looked at pupils' books with three class teachers.

I spoke with parents at the end of the school day and considered 45 responses to Ofsted's online questionnaire, Parent View, including 43 written contributions by parents. I spoke with staff and took account of 12 responses to the online staff questionnaire. I analysed a range of school documentation including information about pupils' progress and achievement, the school improvement plan and safeguarding checks, policies and procedures. We discussed your evaluation of the school's effectiveness and plans for improvement.