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Miss Katie Hancock
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Dear Miss Hancock

Short inspection of The Royal Kent CofE Primary School

Following my visit to the school on 20 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 October 2014.

This school continues to be good.

The leadership team has maintained the good quality of education in the school since the last inspection. Since joining the school in 2015, you have worked with determination and focus to unite the school community and drive the school forward. Leaders are brave and uncompromising in pursuing the values of the school. Working together with governors, you have ensured that the wider leadership of the school is effective and focused. Systems, including those for safeguarding, are regularly revised and improved. Robust ongoing analysis ensures that improvement initiatives are well informed and systematically monitored. Staff are supportive of leaders. They too are ambitious for the school and its pupils. A sense of teamwork unites everyone. Relationships across all layers of the school are productive, professional, open and friendly. As a result, morale is high and standards are rising.

Governors are highly effective partners in school improvement. They are dedicated, skilled and well informed. They supplement the information they receive by regular visits to see things for themselves. This helps them to hold leaders to account effectively, by providing both support and challenge. Governors share the very high aspirations modelled by leaders across the school.

Pupils thrive in the supportive atmosphere of the school. They value the importance of politeness and kindness. Pupils told me that they like their school because 'there is a good atmosphere, a good vibe, we get along.' Pupils relish the exciting opportunities provided by the rich curriculum. They told me that they particularly enjoy making models and performing plays. They value the recent improvements to

the environment such as the creation of the multi-use games area (MUGA).

Pupils feel well supported by adults in their learning. They explained to me that 'teachers are always there for you if you are struggling.' Parents and carers value the community feel of the school. Parents who spoke to me emphasised a sense of partnership. Most parents writing on Parent View, the Ofsted online survey, were supportive of school leaders, recognising the 'optimistic feel' and the 'fantastic community'.

You have maintained the strengths identified at the previous inspection. Teaching is consistently effective. Adults across the school use questions well to extend pupils' thinking or to identify if pupils are confused and need support. Children get off to a good start in the Reception Year. They make good progress from their starting points because the environment is stimulating and learning opportunities are well matched to their needs and interests. Adults are highly skilled. Pupils across the school are polite and behave well. During the inspection, pupils demonstrated attitudes which supported their learning effectively. For example, pupils responded consistently well to questions and feedback, working well in pairs and groups to develop their learning.

You have addressed the previous inspection areas for improvement. Expectations of pupils are high, including those who are most able. Pupils told me that they feel challenged by their tasks and that extensions are always available. You are not complacent, however; you acknowledge the need to increase opportunities for pupils to write across the curriculum. There are occasions when pupils, including the most able, do not transfer the high expectations of spelling, punctuation and grammar in literacy across curriculum boundaries to other subject areas.

Safeguarding is effective.

The leadership team has ensured that all safeguarding arrangements are fit for purpose. Leaders know the school and the community well, which allows them to spot when things are not as they should be. All staff who completed the online survey felt that pupils were safe at school.

Staff and governors are well trained in safeguarding pupils and know the key factors that may put them at risk. They are especially vigilant regarding pupils' appropriate use of online technology, both in and out of school. Pupils demonstrated a good understanding of e-safety.

Inspection findings

- During the inspection, we looked closely together at the effectiveness of phonics teaching in key stage 1. In the 2018 national phonics screening check, fewer pupils attained the expected standard than national proportions. However, pupils in the current Year 1 are taught phonics effectively. They are confident in learning their sounds and in applying their knowledge to their reading and writing. Teaching is skilled and expectations are high. For example, during the inspection, pupils were looking for, and identifying well, the 'oe' sound in words

such as superheroes. As a result of effective teaching, pupils are making good progress.

- For pupils in Years 2 and 3 who need to catch up with their phonetic learning, small group work is well matched to their needs. It is delivered by confident and well-trained adults. As a result, these pupils too are making good progress from their starting points to catch up.
- Despite providing a wide range of supports for pupils with special educational needs and/or disabilities and those who joined the school, you were disappointed with pupils' progress in writing at the end of Year 6 in the national assessments in 2018. You have responded by rigorous review of provision. Staff development through visiting other schools and training courses has further supported the effective leadership of the English leaders. Pupils' current progress in writing is improving.
- During our learning walk, we saw writing across the school that was well matched to age-related expectations. Pupils were writing poetry, plays and instructions using appropriate styles and rich vocabulary. Nevertheless, pupils' books across the wider curriculum lacked opportunity for pupils to write at length in other subjects. We also identified that the high expectations of spelling, punctuation and grammar demonstrated in literacy books were not transferred consistently across other curriculum areas.
- We looked together at the provision for the disadvantaged pupils. Books of the disadvantaged pupils demonstrate that they are making good progress from their starting points across the curriculum. This good progress is also shown in school information. Pastoral support for pupils is wide-ranging and drawn from a comprehensive understanding of individual needs. Nevertheless, school leaders want to track this range of support even more closely to ensure that interventions are effective. You have commissioned an audit to help you review this and are awaiting the results.
- We looked closely at how well boys are supported by the curriculum. In the 2018 end-of-key-stage assessments in Year 2 and Year 6, boys attained less well than girls. Current school information indicates that boys are making good progress from their starting points across the curriculum. During our learning walk, we saw that boys were well engaged. They were keen to answer questions and were developing learning behaviours that supported independence, such as using dictionaries to correct spelling mistakes.

Next steps for the school

Leaders and those responsible for governance should ensure that:

- opportunities for pupils to consolidate and extend their writing skills across the wider curriculum are widened
- expectations of spelling, punctuation and grammar are as consistently high across the curriculum as they are in English lessons.

I am copying this letter to the chair of the governing body, the director of education for the Diocese of Guildford, the regional schools commissioner and the director of children's services for Surrey. 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 and with staff. I had telephone conversations with representatives from the local authority and the diocese to gather their views of the school. 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. I also considered 70 responses to Parent View, the Ofsted online survey, including 36 free-text responses, 23 responses to the staff survey and 46 responses to the pupil survey.