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Mr Paul Ryan
Headteacher
St Margaret's, Collier Street Church of England Voluntary Controlled School
Collier Street
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Dear Mr Ryan

Short inspection of St Margaret's, Collier Street Church of England Voluntary Controlled School

Following my visit to the school on 16 March 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 July 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 are an inspirational and determined leader who works tirelessly to provide the best education possible for the pupils in your care. You have taken decisive actions on staffing and finances. As a result, children now enjoy a better start to their education and all pupils benefit from a creative and lively curriculum. Parents report that the school is 'fantastic' and are especially positive about your leadership.

Children are increasingly doing well in the early years and younger pupils in the school really enjoy learning. Older pupils make good progress, especially in reading, and are prepared very well for their next stage of education. Pupils thrive in the school because all staff have a thorough understanding of their strengths and individual foibles. Pupils relish school because they feel part of a close community where everyone looks after each other. The school's Christian ethos is promoted very effectively and pupils make the most of the many opportunities to reflect on what it means to be a good citizen. The curriculum, especially the quality of music teaching, is a real strength of the school, with pupils learning how to play a number of instruments during their time at school.

You and your leaders know the school exceptionally well. You have identified effectively the areas that require further attention and, alongside staff and

governors, you have put into place appropriate plans to address these. There are good systems in place to reward staff performance and increasingly effective approaches to share the best practice in the school. There are strong links with local schools that leaders use well to check the accuracy of their assessment of pupils' work and share ideas. The local authority has provided useful support to develop the middle leaders. As a result, staff are overwhelmingly positive about the school and your leadership.

You have addressed successfully the areas that required further attention from the previous inspection report. The quality of handwriting and presentation across the school is much improved. Work in pupils' books is now neat, and handwriting is well developed from an early age because pupils make good use of the advice and guidance provided. You have successfully introduced the new mathematics curriculum so that pupils experience a wider range of topics in mathematics including data-handling. However, a few of the most able pupils in both key stages find work in mathematics occasionally too straightforward. Similarly, some pupils are not writing confidently at greater depth because teachers are not planning adroitly to stretch these pupils sufficiently.

Safeguarding is effective.

There are good systems in place to ensure that pupils are safe. Leaders ensure that the procedures to recruit staff are thorough and rigorous. Leaders with additional responsibility receive appropriate training and all staff are given regular updates so that they are quick to respond to any pupils' concerns. Pupils feel safe and well supported and are confident about managing risks. They receive good guidance about how to stay safe online as well as how to cross the road. All pupils learn to swim, an important skill given the school's proximity to the river Medway. Governors make regular checks on the school's safeguarding practices and have a good knowledge of the latest guidance. As a result, parents are unanimous in their view that pupils are looked after well.

Inspection findings

- During the inspection I considered the effectiveness of the teaching of writing across the school. Teachers use consistently effective approaches to plan for and meet the needs of the mixed-year-group classes that they teach. For example, teachers make good use of success criteria and learning intentions to set out the learning goals for pupils to achieve. Teachers make especially good use of assessment information to provide useful guidance and advice for pupils. Pupils respond well to feedback and commit to improving their work. The new approach to improve pupils' spelling skills is also having an impact. Current achievement information shows that more pupils are on track to reach expected standards than in the past, with many pupils making significantly more progress from the beginning of the year. However, few pupils in the current Year 6 are exceeding expectations and working at greater depth.
- The achievement of pupils in mathematics, especially in key stage 1, was also reviewed during this inspection. Teachers have embedded the new mathematics

curriculum effectively. Pupils are increasingly confident in solving problems and explaining their reasoning when working on mathematics questions. Work seen in books was of a high quality and pupils currently in the school are making good progress. In 2016, pupils attained well and made good progress from their starting points at the end of key stage 2. However, a few of the most able pupils in both key stages reported that sometimes the work is not challenging. This is reflected in their books which contain very few mistakes.

- I also considered the quality of support for pupils' reading, including the support for those pupils who are disadvantaged or who have special educational needs and/or disabilities. In the past, a minority of pupils in key stage 1 did not meet the expected standards in their phonics check. The very effective special educational needs coordinator has taken rapid action to support these pupils and, as a result, the majority of these pupils have now caught up with their peers. Leaders have introduced a new approach to teaching phonics that is more systematic and regular than the previous method. The new library building, established with the support of parents through extensive fundraising, is used very well. More than a quarter of the school attend reading club regularly. Your work to support parents' understanding of phonics and the best way to help their children read is also bearing fruit. As a result, pupils currently in the school continue to make very good progress from their starting points and achieve especially well in their reading.

Next steps for the school

Leaders and those responsible for governance should ensure that:

- they further increase the proportion of the most able pupils working at greater depth in writing and in mathematics by setting targets for this group for the end of each key stage and ensuring that teachers plan more adeptly to meet the needs of these pupils.

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

Seamus Murphy
Her Majesty's Inspector

Information about the inspection

I visited the school for one day. I met with you, your leaders, staff and governors, as well as speaking with a representative of the local authority. Policies around safeguarding, your own evaluation of the school's work and other documents were

scrutinised. I visited all year groups to see teaching and learning. I also looked at pupils' work in lessons with leaders, as well as a selection of the most able pupils' writing books from Years 2 and 6. I met with the special educational needs coordinator to review a case study and disadvantaged pupils' work. There were informal meetings with pupils. The 42 responses to Parent View and the eight responses from staff to the online Ofsted survey were also analysed. I also took into account the views of parents with whom I spoke to informally at the end of the school day.