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Mrs Jacquie Chambers
Headteacher
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Dear Mrs Chambers

Short inspection of St Mary's CofE Controlled Primary School, Byfleet

Following my visit to the school on 5 March 2019, 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 January 2015.

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 introduced a sense of urgency about improving the school's work since your appointment in September 2018. You have prioritised developments appropriately and have begun to address inconsistencies in teaching. You have already achieved considerable success. The quality of pupils' learning has improved substantially during the past six months.

You and your team share ambitious aims for the school's future. Teachers and teaching assistants have welcomed renewed purpose and direction in the school's development and are committed to playing their part. There is a buzz about the school's work, as improvements in teaching are implemented and standards begin to rise.

Your positive, honest and open approach to school leadership has quickly won the respect of staff, parents, pupils and governors alike. Parents recognise improvements in the school's work, including higher expectations of pupils' learning and behaviour.

You and your leadership team have overhauled and updated the assessment system. You have used training well to ensure that teachers make consistently accurate assessments of pupils' progress. As a result, you have a clear and reliable

view of the quality of teaching and learning across the school. Aspirational targets for pupils' achievement are contributing well to increased expectations of pupils' learning.

Most pupils make strong progress in English and mathematics, and in a range of other subjects. However, historic variations in the quality of teaching have created gaps in some pupils' knowledge and understanding. This is particularly the case for disadvantaged pupils and for pupils in upper key stage 2. In 2018, standards in reading and mathematics were above the national average at the end of Year 6, including at the higher standard. However, standards in writing were lower than the national average.

Recent improvements in teaching mean that teachers identify and address weaknesses in pupils' understanding much more swiftly than before. However, you rightly recognise that some pupils, including disadvantaged pupils, could achieve more, particularly in writing. You and your team continue to focus on ensuring that all pupils benefit from consistently effective teaching.

Strong relationships contribute well to pupils' enjoyment of school and to their personal and social development. For example, during the inspection a group of boys in Nursery chatted happily together as they pretended to make cakes in the kitchen play area, while pupils in Year 6 worked together maturely during an English lesson as they discussed and completed a writing task.

The recently appointed chair of the governing body is currently addressing weaknesses in governance which have hampered the school's development in the past. He has rightly identified the need to improve governors' understanding of the school's performance so that they can hold leaders to account more effectively for pupils' outcomes.

Safeguarding is effective.

The school is well organised, tidy and safe. Clear routines and expectations contribute well to the school's cohesive and orderly environment. Pupils feel safe and secure. They say that behaviour is good in the school and that teachers sort out any concerns quickly.

You use training effectively to ensure that staff are clear about their responsibilities for pupils' safety and knowledgeable about what to do if they have any concerns. You have established an efficient and effective centralised system which enables you and your staff to record, monitor and follow up any safeguarding issues closely. Strong links with agencies enable you to draw on specialist advice wherever necessary to support pupils and their families.

You make sure that safeguarding policies are fit for purpose, understood by all members of staff and followed consistently throughout the school. Recruitment checks are fully completed and monitored rigorously so that pupils can learn in a safe environment.

Inspection findings

- I focused particularly on the following areas during the inspection: how well leaders use pupil premium funding to support disadvantaged pupils' learning; the extent to which leaders have improved pupils' progress in writing since the previous inspection; and pupils' behaviour.
- The headteacher has been quick to recognise weaknesses in disadvantaged pupils' progress. She has worked constructively with teachers and leaders to review the use of pupil premium and to improve the quality of support for disadvantaged pupils.
- Although disadvantaged pupils are not yet achieving as well as they should in all subjects and year groups, their learning has begun to improve. In the past, disadvantaged pupils have not achieved consistently well enough. In 2018, the proportion of disadvantaged pupils achieving the expected standard in reading, writing and mathematics at the end of key stage 2 was lower than the national average. However, their learning remains a priority for the school's development.
- The headteacher has revised the school's approach to teaching writing skills so that teaching now builds pupils' knowledge and skills more securely and consistently than previously. Although recent developments in teaching are not yet fully established, pupils' written work is undeniably of a better quality than before. Historic weaknesses in the teaching of English have hampered pupils' progress in writing in the past, and there is therefore still an element of variation in pupils' progress.
- The special needs coordinator has been influential in helping teachers to strengthen behaviour management strategies. As a result, misbehaviour during lessons is increasingly rare and, where it does occur, skilfully managed. Pupils behave well throughout the school. They enjoy school and are eager to learn.

Next steps for the school

Leaders and those responsible for governance should ensure that:

- recent developments in teaching are fully established across the school so that all groups of pupils, including disadvantaged pupils, achieve as well as they should, particularly in writing
- governors develop an accurate view of the school's performance in order to provide effective support and challenge for school leaders.

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

Julie Sackett
Ofsted Inspector

Information about the inspection

During the inspection, I met with you, your deputy headteacher, the chair of the governing body and a representative of the local authority. I also spoke with staff, parents and pupils. I took account of 37 views expressed by parents through Ofsted's online questionnaire, Parent View, 37 free-text comments, 33 responses to the staff survey and 118 responses to the pupils' survey.

You and I observed learning in all classes during the inspection. I looked at pupils' work during lessons, as well as reviewing a sample of pupils' work separately with you and your deputy headteacher. I reviewed a range of documents, including the school's development plan, the single central register and information about pupils' progress and attendance.