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Michelle Grima
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Dear Miss Grima

Short inspection of Burham Church of England Primary School

Following my visit to the school on 5 December 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. Your school provides pupils with a welcoming, inclusive and safe place to learn. Pupils say that kind teachers and friendly classmates helped them to settle quickly when they joined the school.

Strong relationships, clear routines and high expectations provide a strong framework for the school's daily work. The quiet, calm and purposeful atmosphere contributes well to pupils' learning during lessons. Pupils enjoy school and behave well throughout the day. They arrive in the morning ready to work and keen to get started, cheerfully greeting each other and their teachers. Pupils are polite, caring and proud of their school.

Effective teaching during early years ensures that children are well prepared for the next stage of their learning. The proportion of children achieving a good level of development at the end of Reception Year is consistently higher than the national average. Pupils achieve well in English and mathematics during key stages 1 and 2. In 2018, the proportions of pupils achieving the expected standards in reading, writing and mathematics were above national averages at the end of both key stages.

You and your team give reading a high priority. Consistently strong teaching equips pupils with secure and reliable reading skills which support their learning very well in English and across the curriculum. As a result, pupils achieve particularly well in reading, including at the higher standards. In 2018, the proportion of pupils

achieving the higher standards in writing and mathematics at the end of key stage 2 were lower than in reading, and below the national averages. You have rightly identified the need to secure equally high standards of achievement in reading, writing and mathematics.

You and your leadership team have a clear and accurate view of the school's performance. You use a range of activities well to check the school's work and have identified sensible priorities for future development. Governors are knowledgeable and perceptive about the school's performance. They work constructively and effectively with you and your staff team, providing good levels of challenge and support.

You and your team have successfully addressed each of the key issues for improvement identified at the time of the previous inspection. You have strengthened communication with parents, raised standards in writing and ensured better challenge in the work set for the most able pupils. Parents are pleased with the school's work. They feel that their children are happy and safe, and say that their children are learning well.

Safeguarding is effective.

You and your team take any concerns about pupils' safety very seriously. You maintain good links with parents and agencies, such as children's services, to ensure pupils' safety. You and your team respond promptly to specialist advice.

You ensure that safeguarding policies and procedures are fit for purpose, are clearly understood and are followed consistently by all members of staff. You make sure that recruitment checks on staff, and other adults who work in school, are completed properly. Staff and pupil records are stored securely and confidentially. A recent safeguarding audit, carried out by the local authority, confirms strengths in the school's safety procedures.

The school's tidy, attractive and orderly environment ensures that pupils can play and learn safely. Adults know pupils well. They are alert to pupils' needs and ensure that pupils are supervised appropriately throughout the school day.

Inspection findings

■ During this inspection, I focused particularly on:

- pupils' safety and well-being, including attendance
- the quality of support for pupils at risk of exclusion
- how effectively teaching enables the most able pupils to achieve well
- how successfully phonics teaching equips pupils with fundamental reading skills
- the quality of communication between school and parents.

- During the past year, leaders have increased the focus on ensuring that pupils attend school regularly. They have established rigorous procedures for checking individual pupils' attendance, working effectively with parents and with the local authority to support pupils and their families. Leaders take prompt action if they have any concerns about individual pupils' attendance. They secured a considerable increase in pupils' attendance in 2018.
- Leaders take every step possible to support pupils at risk of exclusion and their families. They liaise closely with parents and agencies, including the local authority's multi-agency inclusion team. Leaders and teachers put effective plans in place to support individual pupils, responding sensitively to their specific needs. The school's commitment to supporting vulnerable pupils has resulted in a dramatic reduction in the rates of fixed-term exclusion during the past two years.
- The quality of teaching has improved since the previous inspection. Teachers have higher expectations of pupils' learning than at the time of the previous inspection and set increasingly challenging work for the most able pupils. However, teaching does not always deepen pupils' learning fully enough, particularly in writing and mathematics. Leaders are now addressing this aspect of the school's work so that the most able pupils achieve the higher standards at the end of key stage 2.
- The work in pupils' English books, discussions with leaders and information about pupils' learning indicate that pupils make strong progress in reading. They develop reliable reading strategies during early years and key stage 1 and go on to become mature and proficient readers by the end of key stage 2.
- In 2018, a combination of factors, including an increase in the proportion of pupils with special educational needs and/or disabilities, led to a dip in the results of the Year 1 phonics screening check. However, effective phonics teaching has ensured that those pupils who have taken a little longer to develop secure phonics skills are now catching up with their classmates quickly.
- Leaders have improved the quality of communication with parents since the previous inspection. They use a range of strategies, such as newsletters and regular parent forums with the headteacher, to inform parents about the school's work and to gather parents' views.
- Parents and governors recognise improvements in the quality of communication since the previous inspection. Most parents who responded to Ofsted's online questionnaire, Parent View, feel that they receive valuable information about their children's progress and say that the school responds well to any concerns.

Next steps for the school

Leaders and those responsible for governance should ensure that:

- the most able pupils make consistently strong progress and achieve the higher standards in reading, writing and mathematics by the end of key stage 2.

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

Julie Sackett
Ofsted Inspector

Information about the inspection

Together, you and I visited all classes during the inspection. I looked at pupils' books during visits to classrooms and spoke with pupils about their work. I also looked separately at a sample of pupils' workbooks with your English and mathematics leaders.

I met with you and your deputy headteacher. I spoke with two governors, including the chair of the governing body. I also spoke with representatives from the local authority and the diocese. I talked with pupils in the playground and in the dining hall during lunchtime.

I considered 51 responses to Ofsted's online questionnaire, Parent View. I also spoke with parents informally at the end of the school day. I took account of 18 questionnaires completed by pupils. I reviewed the school's website and considered a range of documents, including your summary of the school's effectiveness and the school's improvement plan. I also looked at safeguarding policies, procedures and records.