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Mrs Clare Molyneux
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Dear Mrs Molyneux

Short inspection of Ropley Church of England Primary School

Following my visit to the school on 27 September 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 March 2013.

This school continues to be good.

The leadership team has maintained the good quality of education in the school since the last inspection. In this small school, you, together with staff and governors, have adapted well to the changes to the primary curriculum and assessments introduced in 2014. You have been focused sharply on raising standards in the school. For instance, in 2015, you identified weaknesses in the quality of teaching. Your swift and effective action to eradicate poor teaching and to help pupils to catch up has improved the rates of progress across the school. As a result, pupils' attainment has risen, particularly in reading and writing.

Your assessment of the schools' effectiveness is accurate. Leaders and governors use an appropriate range of methods to find out how well the school is performing and, when necessary, deploy resources exactly where they are needed. For example, when a dip in writing standards was identified last year, senior leaders delivered additional classes in key stage 2 to help pupils to make accelerated progress. Governors know the school well because they work closely with staff and maintain a watchful eye on pupils' performance. Governors are supportive and, vitally, challenge leaders to improve outcomes for pupils further.

Pupils are polite, well mannered and smart. They work hard in class and enjoy learning. The range of clubs and sporting activities is impressive, and parents and pupils value the effort that goes into running these. Pupils reported that behaviour is good across the school and that, when problems do occur, teachers deal with

them well. The curriculum is broad and interesting. Pupils enjoy the range of trips and visitors to their school and use these experiences to gather first-hand information about their topics. For example, Year 4 pupils visited the Watercress Line and wrote interesting and articulate recounts of their day. Computing is a particular strength. Pupils learn to write basic commands to control robots or characters on screen. Pupils use their understanding of spelling, grammar and punctuation well and standards of writing in all subjects are high. You, rightly, recognise that the strong progress in writing needs to be accelerated so that a greater proportion of pupils write at a high standard by the end of key stage 2.

At the time of the last inspection, you were charged with improving systems for checking and evaluating the impact of school improvements. You have, wisely, worked with external advisers from the local authority to gain greater insight into the performance of the school. Plans now incorporate clear actions and appropriate timings, and state which staff are responsible for their completion. Analysis of the plans shows that leaders measure the impact of their work and appropriately change their plans when they do not have the desired impact. As a result, the pace of improvement across the school has increased.

Safeguarding is effective.

The leadership team has ensured that all safeguarding arrangements are fit for purpose and that records are detailed and of high quality. Checks on staff are completed before employment commences and recorded methodically. Leaders and governors check that these are in place. Recently, governors attended useful safeguarding training provided by the Diocese of Winchester. Checks on the school have a sharp focus on protecting children.

Staff are well trained in safeguarding and know how to identify concerns when they arise. Leaders foster strong relationships with parents and use their links with outside agencies to garner additional support when needed.

Pupils learn about personal safety and risk management. For example, Year 1 works with the local fire and rescue service to learn how to prevent fires and what to do if they find one. Pupils join leaders on the monthly health and safety inspection to identify and minimise risks in school. As a result, pupils are well placed to keep themselves safe from harm.

Inspection findings

- At the start of the inspection, we agreed to look at the effectiveness of safeguarding; the progress of disadvantaged pupils in key stage 2; the quality of teaching, learning and assessment of writing; how effectively governors and leaders monitor standards; and the level of challenge for pupils, including the most able.
- In 2016, disadvantaged pupils in Year 6 made better progress than others nationally in reading and mathematics. Leaders and teachers accurately identify the needs of disadvantaged pupils and use sharply focused interventions and

support to help these pupils in class. Governors check the progress of disadvantaged pupils in fine detail and deploy additional resources when required to help them catch up. As a result, the progress of disadvantaged pupils across the school has accelerated.

- In the last two academic years, pupils' attainment in writing has been lower than their attainment in reading and mathematics in both key stage 1 and 2. Last year, leaders and teachers identified weaknesses in pupils' understanding of spelling, grammar and punctuation and provided additional teaching to address this. The vast majority of pupils across the school now write at the level appropriate for their age. Pupils write sophisticated and interesting texts in a wide range of subjects. Consequently, progress in writing across the school has improved rapidly.
- Leaders check the quality of teaching regularly and provide staff with incisive feedback to help them improve. Governors work with leaders to scrutinise pupils' work and assessment information to identify any areas of weakness. Leaders at all levels are skilled and contribute to the development, delivery and evaluation of school improvement plans. As a result, weaknesses are recognised and rectified swiftly.
- Typically, a high proportion of pupils, including the most able, make expected progress in the school. Recently, leaders and teachers have raised expectations in lessons to successfully accelerate pupils' progress. For example, Year 3 wrote interesting adventure stories, applying their understanding of paragraphs to group-related sentences and using inverted commas to identify direct speech. Nevertheless, in mathematics, pupils do not consistently complete work that challenges them to solve problems or to reason. As a result, a smaller proportion of pupils, including the most able, attain at a high standard in mathematics than their peers nationally.

Next steps for the school

Leaders and those responsible for governance should ensure that:

- pupils routinely complete challenging tasks in mathematics
- progress accelerates so that a greater proportion of pupils attain at a high standard in writing and mathematics.

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

Yours sincerely

Daniel Lambert
Her Majesty's Inspector

Information about the inspection

I met with you, school leaders and three governors, including the chair of the governing body. I observed learning in four classes. I analysed a range of school documentation, including information about pupils' achievement, the school improvement plan and safeguarding checks, policies and procedures. We discussed your own evaluation of the school's effectiveness. I considered the 45 responses to Ofsted's online survey, Parent View, and spoke to parents at the beginning of the day. Some parents offered written responses, which I also considered. I met with pupils from Years 3 to 6 and gathered the views of other pupils throughout the day.