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Mr Nathan Cline
Headteacher
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Dear Mr Cline

Short inspection of Guestling Bradshaw Church of England Primary School

Following my visit to the school on 19 April 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 April 2012.

This school continues to be good.

The leadership team has maintained the good quality of education in the school since the last inspection. Since your appointment in September 2015, the whole community has been impressed by the impact you have had on improving the culture of the school. Staff and governors comment enthusiastically about the structure and consistency you have brought to the school. This approach is helping to raise standards and improve teaching. Every member of staff knows what is expected of them, but at the same time feels valued and well supported.

Parents are overwhelmingly positive about the school. Every single parent who completed the online questionnaire, Parent View, would recommend the school to others. Parents praised many aspects of the school's work and in particular your leadership. They made comments like, 'The school is just wonderful in every aspect... it's like a haven and it's perfect.' Staff thoroughly enjoy their work and feel part of a team. As one staff member commented, 'In my opinion the school goes from strength to strength and I feel very privileged and proud to be part of that.' Governors fulfil their roles professionally and diligently. They have extensive knowledge and expertise that allow them to both challenge and support you appropriately. One governor explained how your 'energetic, enthusiastic and dynamic' leadership had inspired staff to make the changes needed to improve the school.

Pupils really enjoy coming to school. One parent explained how their children happily skip in to school each morning. Attendance, especially of disadvantaged pupils, is

improving because of dedicated work with families. Pupils are well behaved and care for each other; older pupils are kind and supportive to their younger peers. This year, you have encouraged pupils to be 'learning superheroes' by demonstrating qualities such as independence, engagement, enthusiasm, resilience and perseverance. I certainly saw many of these qualities being demonstrated by pupils when I visited their classrooms. You set the tone and rhythm of the school and you enthuse and inspire pupils to succeed in whatever they do. For example, you conducted the Year 4 choir to win a local singing competition. Your staff go the 'extra mile' to ensure that pupils have a wide range of clubs to attend and benefit from exciting educational visits to castles, museums, woods, parks and supermarkets to enhance their learning.

At the time of the previous inspection, leaders were asked to improve the impact that subject leaders had on raising standards across the curriculum. Current subject leaders know their subjects very well and can identify clear strengths in their areas of responsibility and know what still needs to improve. These leaders appreciate the time they are given to fulfil their roles and the support and structures that you and your deputy provide for them. As a result of their work, the curriculum is interesting, relevant and develops pupils' skills and knowledge well in a range of subjects.

Leaders were also asked to improve aspects of the teaching of mathematics and writing at the time of the previous inspection. Although pupils make good progress across the school in these key subjects, you were rightly disappointed with the outcomes at the end of key stage 2 in 2016 in the spelling, punctuation and grammar tests and by the lack of pupils in Year 2 demonstrating a greater depth of understanding in mathematics. You quickly sought additional guidance and support from the local authority and your local collaboration of schools to address these weaknesses decisively. Together with your deputy headteacher and governors, you are carefully monitoring the improvements already being made in these areas.

You have a secure and accurate self-evaluation of your school's strengths and weaknesses. For example, you know that some teaching could still be improved. However, we agreed that some of your written documentation produced to demonstrate the effectiveness of the school is over lengthy and unnecessary. We discussed ways that this could be simplified, saving valuable time, without distracting from the important work of ensuring that pupils make good progress.

Safeguarding is effective.

When you were appointed you quickly addressed the weaknesses in record-keeping that existed. You sought external guidance and validation to confirm that the steps you took to keep pupils safe were in line with statutory requirements. The local authority's guidance in this area has been very effective and led to rapid improvements. Current reporting and record-keeping procedures are secure, timely and accurate and have been used as a good practice example across the county.

Staff and governors are aware of the risks to pupils in the school, starting with the very busy main road outside. The arrival and departure of pupils by car and bus are managed safely and professionally. Online safety is another concern and you have recently

provided additional guidance to pupils and parents about the dangers of video-sharing websites.

Staff and governors are well trained in their safeguarding responsibilities and understand their duties in terms of keeping pupils safe from harm. Recruitment checks on staff are carried out in line with latest guidance.

Inspection findings

- We agreed to focus on the following areas during this inspection:
 - how leaders ensure that teaching and the curriculum meet the needs of all pupils, especially those who are disadvantaged
 - how well current key stage 2 pupils are developing their skills in writing, especially spelling, punctuation and grammar
 - how well current pupils are progressing in mathematics
 - if boys in key stage 1 who had fallen behind are catching up.
- You and your deputy headteacher know the school well and have had a demonstrable impact on improving teaching. However, you recognise that some teachers could provide their pupils with further challenge. Effective teaching enables disadvantaged pupils to make at least similar, and sometimes stronger, progress than their peers in a range of subjects.
- Other leaders contribute to designing a curriculum that is broad and balanced and allows all pupils to participate in exciting learning opportunities. As a result, pupils develop skills, knowledge and understanding well in a range of subject areas. Governors are keen that pupils have a wide range of opportunities and are well prepared for the next stage of their education as 'well-rounded and socially adept' individuals.
- You have put in place extensive processes to ensure consistency in teaching, assessment and monitoring throughout the school. However, we agreed there is the potential to refine some of these systems to ease teacher and leader workload, without losing the consistency of approach, or slowing the progress of pupils.
- In the 2016 key stage 2 assessments, no pupils demonstrated a greater depth in writing and a very low proportion of pupils met the expected standard in the grammar, punctuation and spelling test. During my visit I saw that pupils across the school are developing a rich vocabulary and use of language in their writing. Some of this is inspired by the high-quality texts they read together as a class. Children in the early years make good progress in developing their writing skills. There have been concerted efforts by leaders to raise the prominence and profile of spelling in the school. Many different strategies have been tried including spelling bees. However, improvements across the school have not been consistent and it is not yet clear which strategies work best.
- In mathematics, attainment at the expected standard at the end of key stage 2 and at greater depth at key stage 1 in 2016 was disappointing. Leaders have a clear focus on improving pupils' fluency, problem-solving and reasoning skills in mathematics. They have introduced a range of resources including manipulatives and textbooks to support this. Pupils have responded well to these initiatives and the effective use of

'children as teachers' helps pupils to deepen their understanding by verbalising and explaining their own understanding to others.

- Current pupils are generally making good progress in mathematics. However, there is some remaining variability in the quality of teaching which slows progress for some pupils. For example, sometimes pupils are not given work that is challenging enough, while at other times pupils are allowed to move on too quickly when they have not mastered a concept. In some instances only the most able pupils are given the opportunity to deepen their learning by completing reasoning tasks.
- Some key stage 1 boys had fallen behind their peers nationally in reading and writing during the early years and with phonics in Year 1. They are now making similar progress as the girls in the class and are mostly beginning to catch up. A few of the boys are on track to achieve a greater depth in some subjects.

Next steps for the school

Leaders and those responsible for governance should ensure that:

- all groups of pupils are challenged in mathematics and have regular opportunities to engage in problem-solving and reasoning activities
- teachers move pupils on to more challenging work, especially in mathematics, when they are ready
- they review which current strategies to improve pupils' spelling are most effective and concentrate on embedding these across the school
- they review their self-evaluation, monitoring and assessment documentation so that it is concise, efficient and focused.

I am copying this letter to the chair of the governing body, the director of education for the Diocese of Chichester, the regional schools commissioner and the director of children's services for East Sussex. This letter will be published on the Ofsted website.

Yours sincerely

Lee Selby
Her Majesty's Inspector

Information about the inspection

I met with the headteacher and deputy headteacher to discuss the school's own evaluation of its effectiveness. I carried out two learning walks with senior leaders where we observed learning in classrooms, talked to pupils about their work and looked at a range of workbooks. I looked at a further selection of writing and mathematics books with the headteacher and deputy headteacher to evaluate the progress pupils are making. I met with four governors, including the chair of the governing body, and held a telephone conversation with a representative of the local authority. With a group of four

teachers who have subject leadership roles, I looked at a wide range of pupils' work. I scrutinised a range of safeguarding documentation. I considered 82 responses to the online questionnaire, Parent View, including many free-text comments. I also spoke to a few parents at the start of the school day. I considered 16 responses to the staff questionnaire and 21 responses to the pupil questionnaire.