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Justine Brown  
Headteacher  
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Dear Ms Brown

### **Short inspection of Deal Parochial Church of England Primary School**

Following my visit to the school on 1 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 May 2013.

#### **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, you have built upon the strengths of the school and made further improvements and innovations. Parents who I spoke to, or who completed the online questionnaire, Parent View, during the inspection were very positive about your leadership. They appreciate the changes you have made that have benefited their children. One parent wrote: 'The school has provided an almost family-like support system and I honestly believe that my children's lives have been totally enriched by this caring and supportive school.' The school is welcoming to all pupils and their families, whatever their background. This has been especially true since the school's admissions procedures changed in September 2013.

Your talented staff are proud to work at the school. They enjoy working with pupils and watching them grow, develop and achieve their goals. You have been innovative in your approach to staffing. You have offered flexibility and created new roles to retain your most experienced teachers, while welcoming new teachers who have brought fresh ideas to the team. Teachers greatly appreciate the continuous professional development they receive, that includes opportunities to work with colleagues in the Deal Learning Alliance.

Children have an excellent start to their learning in the Reception Year. They very quickly develop confidence and independence, and make rapid progress including when learning to read and write. From the very start, there are clear structures and high expectations, so that children know what is required of them. This continues throughout the school and ensures that behaviour is never less than good. Pupils take pride in their school and in their work, which they present very neatly. When we visited classrooms we saw pupils who like to challenge themselves, especially in mathematics. This helps pupils to make good progress. Pupils certainly work hard to demonstrate the school's mission statement of being 'the best I can be'.

At the time of the previous inspection, school leaders were asked to improve the quality of teaching, address the gaps in achievement between boys and girls and improve the early years provision. The quality of teaching throughout the school has been maintained. New staff who joined in September 2016 have quickly settled in and meet your high expectations. There are no significant gaps between the progress made by boys and girls throughout the school. The early years provision has improved dramatically. The learning environment, both inside and outside, promotes learning very well and stimulates children's enthusiasm for creative play and independent discovery.

You are continuing to develop the curriculum to ensure that it meets the needs of pupils and allows them to make rapid progress. Recent developments in the mathematics curriculum are successfully raising standards in key stage 2. Changes to the key stage 1 mathematics curriculum to deepen pupils' understanding of number are still being embedded. You are currently changing the approach to the teaching of reading throughout the school. Your plans aim to ensure that more pupils are challenged to make faster progress and meet the higher standards. You have started to take action to improve attendance, but there is more work to be done to ensure that all pupils attend school regularly.

### **Safeguarding is effective.**

Together with the other leaders with responsibility for safeguarding, you have ensured that all safeguarding arrangements are fit for purpose and records are detailed and of high quality. Governors regularly audit compliance against the latest guidelines and improvements to your procedures have been made as a result.

You work well with other agencies including those that supply early intervention support to keep your most vulnerable pupils safe. When you have specific concerns, you meet with colleagues to discuss thresholds for more intensive support.

By inviting volunteers to the training you provide for staff and governors, you have helped raise the profile of safeguarding in the wider school community. You set up a strong working group to explore online safety. This group involves parents, staff and governors with relevant experience and skills. This has enabled you to tackle issues in this area of concern, including changing the school's mobile telephone policy.

## Inspection findings

- During this short inspection, we agreed to focus on: safeguarding and attendance; how leaders have improved teaching, especially for disadvantaged pupils; progress in mathematics in key stage 2, especially for girls; progress in reading for the most able key stage 1 pupils; and the school's curriculum.
- You have shared your expectations about good attendance with parents in school newsletters. You congratulate the best-attending class in assembly each week. Despite these actions, attendance is not improving and is currently below the national average. You realise that pupils need to be in school to make good progress and will be strengthening your expectations and procedures in this area.
- You work well with your deputy headteacher and have gained the trust of the staff team when making improvements. Teachers' assessment is accurate and is moderated both in school and across the Deal Learning Alliance. As a result, teachers know what they need to teach to help all groups of pupils to make good progress. Subject leaders know the strengths and weaknesses in their areas of responsibility. Governors know the school well and ask leaders challenging questions. They visit the school regularly to check that initiatives are making a positive difference to pupils' outcomes. You and the governing body recognise that small groups of disadvantaged pupils are not yet making rapid progress to catch up with other pupils nationally.
- Problem-solving and reasoning skills are embedded well throughout key stage 2 and are helping pupils to think far more deeply about their mathematics. Pupils understand the calculations they are carrying out, rather than merely following a process. Girls are equally as confident as boys in mathematics lessons. Workbooks show that girls and boys are making good progress. The most able pupils are challenged to deepen their thinking further and solve a wider variety of problems. We saw pupils in Year 6 successfully solving multi-step problems using algebra. Pupils in key stage 2 make choices about the difficulty of the challenge they complete. They generally choose sensibly so that they have to think hard and apply their skills. You are trialling a different approach to mathematics in key stage 1 which you believe will improve standards further over time. The approach requires pupils to have a much deeper understanding of the number system and the mathematics they complete. It is too early for governors and leaders to see the full impact of this new approach.
- You recognised that not enough of the most able readers in key stage 1 demonstrated a greater depth of understanding in the 2016 assessments. The most able readers I met during the inspection clearly enjoy reading and are developing a range of comprehension skills. They are encouraged to read regularly both at home and at school. A programme to help key stage 1 pupils who have fallen behind in their reading is having a strong impact. Pupils who are taking part in this programme are catching up quickly because of specific and helpful teaching. However, the most able readers find it hard to recall how their teachers are helping them to improve their reading skills further, beyond encouraging them to read more. You and your team are currently reviewing the teaching of reading to improve the proportion of pupils who are able to

demonstrate the higher standards.

- Writing skills are applied well throughout the curriculum. Pupils write for a variety of purposes and audiences. This helps pupils to make strong progress in their writing. Pupils' skills are being developed well in subjects such as history and geography. There are interesting projects based on the local area that are sometimes completed with other schools in the alliance. Some of the parents I spoke to were very thankful for the way the school had prepared their older children so well for secondary school education. Furthermore, parents were extremely positive about the school's excellent provision for music and the improvements made in sporting provision in recent years. During the inspection, I heard the uplifting singing of the choir rehearsing for a future performance at the Royal Albert Hall. The recent introduction of coaching in tennis, and competition in swimming, has added to the extensive sporting provision.

### **Next steps for the school**

Leaders and those responsible for governance should ensure that:

- current work to improve attendance is strengthened to ensure that all groups of pupils attend school regularly
- developments in the mathematics curriculum are embedded so that all groups of pupils, including those who disadvantaged, make rapid progress from their starting points
- plans to improve the teaching of reading are implemented so that the most able pupils make accelerated progress towards meeting the new higher standards.

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

Yours sincerely

Lee Selby

**Her Majesty's Inspector**

### **Information about the inspection**

During this inspection I met with you and your deputy headteacher to discuss your self-evaluation of the school's effectiveness. We went on three learning walks and visited all classes at least once. When in classrooms, I spoke to pupils about their learning and looked at their workbooks. I heard some of the most able pupils from Year 2 and Year 3 read. I met with a group of teachers to look at a range of pupils' work in different curriculum areas. I met with the leaders responsible for safeguarding and scrutinised a range of safeguarding documentation, including the record of recruitment checks for staff. I met with five governors including the chair of the governing body. I had a conversation with a representative of the local

authority. I looked at a range of documentation relating to attendance, behaviour and the monitoring of teaching. I spoke to parents before school and considered 88 responses to the online questionnaire, Parent View. I considered 12 responses to the confidential staff survey. A representative of the diocese joined the local authority representative, senior leaders and governors for formal feedback about my findings.