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Dear Ms Clay

Short inspection of Stock Church of England Primary School

Following my visit to the school on 8 February 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 2012.

This school continues to be good

The leadership team has maintained the good quality of education in the school since the last inspection. There have been many changes in both staff and leaders during this time. Three of the nine teachers are new to the school. A number of learning support assistants have also changed and their work has altered considerably. You have ensured that their focus is on extending and supporting pupils' progress.

Governance and leadership have also changed significantly since the previous inspection. You appointed your deputy headteacher in January 2014, after taking up your role as headteacher in 2013. In September 2014, you reorganised leadership responsibilities. The impact of that has been that subject leaders have a complete view of their area of the curriculum across the school, rather than being limited to one key stage or another, as was the case at the previous inspection. You now have a new chair and vice-chair, and a number of governors are new to their roles. Improvements have been made to the early years outside area. The play surface has been upgraded and there is now effective cover so that children can use the area at all times during the year.

From the moment I walked into the school, the welcoming, calm atmosphere was immediately apparent. Pupils are polite, courteous and very respectful, holding doors open for each other and adults. The school's class ambassadors greeted me with such pride and confidence that they are all a credit to the school and their

parents. You are rightly proud of your school, your dedicated, hardworking staff and, of course, the delightful pupils who say that they love their 'brilliant, exciting and fun school'. High quality work is well displayed in many of the communal areas showing the breadth of the opportunities that are offered to pupils in your care. Some of the pupils' writing and artwork is particularly impressive and demonstrates how teachers think creatively about the links between subjects. For example, geography and art are linked together in the work on Australia with beautiful displays of pupils' representations of Aboriginal art. This is but one example in a whole host of others that are evident throughout the school. When I met with a group of pupils, it was refreshing to hear the range of subjects that they felt they excelled in; science, art, physical education, religious education and history were among those mentioned. This is testament to the passion that teachers bring to their work and which was clearly evident in the lessons we visited together. You and your staff are aware that there is further work to do to ensure that outcomes are consistently good for all year groups and subjects.

You have done much to ensure that Stock remains at the centre of the village. One parent commented, 'There is always a general sense of happiness and community.' The links you have made with the pre-school go from strength to strength. This has undoubtedly influenced these children's readiness for school which you notice when they come for their weekly assembly with your pupils. Parents are great supporters of the school and say that Stock 'is a lovely, nurturing church school'. They take the opportunity to come into school to see their children's work or class assemblies, as indeed many did during my visit. They also volunteer to do gardening or paint the benches! Governors and leaders ensure that they maintain an effective relationship with the local authority and the diocese. The support that both have given, and continue to give, the school is much appreciated by leaders and governors. The vast majority of parents who responded to Ofsted's online survey were very positive about the school. There were some concerns about how well pupils who have special educational needs and/or disabilities are supported, and that there is some unaddressed bullying within the school. Inspection findings do not support either of these concerns. You and your leaders do everything possible to ensure that all pupils are supported well and make the best progress they can. However, the individual plans for pupils with additional needs do not include measurable targets for progress. This makes it more difficult to check how well they are achieving. Many parents took the opportunity to write texts quoting the excellent support for their child and their family. Pupils were adamant that they 'have never seen any bullying here' and that behaviour is good, which I witnessed during my visit.

Safeguarding is effective

Leaders and governors take seriously their responsibility for ensuring that the school is a safe and happy environment for pupils. All staff understand the part they play in safeguarding children. Appropriate checks are made to ensure the suitability of staff to work with children, and records are maintained well. However, evidence of leaders' monitoring and their subsequent actions is not always as rigorous as it should be. Staff training is both up to date and regular, including 'Prevent' duty training. Good links are made with external agencies to ensure the safety of pupils

and to support families. For example, the school belongs to the Billericay Consortium Trust and, therefore, has access to an attendance officer and a family liaison worker. This has ensured that the most vulnerable pupils and their families are well supported and that their attendance is improving. As one parent put it, 'This is a lovely small school which cares about its pupils and looks after them well.'

Inspection findings

- At the previous inspection, there were some areas that the school needed to improve. The first line of enquiry during this inspection relates, therefore, to improvements in middle-attainers' outcomes and how leaders have ensured that this remains a focus in improvement planning. Pupils in key stage 1 in 2016 who achieved the expected standard in early years, achieved well. Middle-attaining pupils, however, fared less well in Year 6 in 2016. Our discussion about the reasons for this helped to explain the complex needs of some of the pupils in this year group. You addressed these individual concerns well but, despite your actions, not all pupils achieved as well as they might. Pupils across the school are progressing well in reading, writing and mathematics. However, leaders' improvement plans are still not tightly focused on pupils' outcomes. It is, therefore, not always immediately apparent what impact leaders' decisions have had on the progress of all groups of pupils. We looked carefully at teachers' assessments and pupils' work in their books, and talked to pupils about their learning. There is no one group throughout the school that is underachieving, or indeed any one subject. However, there is some variation in progress in one or two classes, but again this is not any one particular group of pupils. You and your senior leaders have put in place actions to ensure that any gaps are identified quickly and addressed appropriately.
- The previous inspection also identified that the school needed to increase the progress of children's literacy skills in the Reception Year. The proportion of children who achieved a good level of development at the end of their time in the Reception class has increased since 2013 and is now above the national average. The very able early years leader knows the strengths and areas for development within the Reception class. Both you and the early years leader have established strong links with the local pre-school. This has ensured that children are not only very familiar with the school environment but also that all staff in both provisions teach phonics consistently.
- As a result, early reading and writing within the Reception class is developing well. The children's learning journeys clearly show evidence of good progression in all of the areas of learning. This is because exciting activities based on children's interests are well planned and there are many opportunities for children to practise their developing reading and writing. Children are clearly enjoying the Antarctic theme at the moment and were keen to tell me about what they are learning.
- The third line of enquiry related to how well writing is taught throughout the school. Pupils at the end of key stage 2 in 2016 did not attain as well as they should have. As a consequence, combined attainment in reading, writing and mathematics was below the national average. We discussed the reasons for the

dip in attainment in Year 6 last year with your deputy headteacher, who also teaches Year 6. Evidence in current pupils' books and your monitoring of assessments show that the predictions for Year 6 in 2017 are realistic and achievable and will be an improvement on last year.

- Evidence seen during my inspection showed that the emphasis you have put on improving writing is paying dividends in all classes. An increasing proportion of pupils across the school are making better than expected progress, as seen in their work, and this is supported well by guiding comments from teachers. There is some high-quality writing work in classes showing the pupils' 'writing journey'. From the very youngest to the oldest, pupils were enthused by the activity that supported their writing or by the passion with which your teachers tackled some interesting topics. Following an inspiring introduction to woolly mammoths, pupils eagerly wrote instructions that would 'grab the reader's attention'. In Year 6, pupils wrote high-quality newspaper reports about the earthquake in Nepal: 'Parents grabbed their children – forgetting their belongings – and ran to safety.'
- The final key line of enquiry that I identified was to see how well pupils who have special educational needs and/or disabilities are progressing across the school. Although small in number, this group of pupils at the end of key stage 2 in 2016 achieved well in reading and mathematics. A similar number of pupils in key stage 1 in 2016, however, achieved less well in these areas. Attendance for these groups was also below the national average in 2016 and persistent absence was above average.
- Evidence seen during the inspection showed that not only do you and your special educational needs coordinator know your pupils well, the provision for them is matched closely to their needs. As a result of learning support assistants' focused work with pupils, targeted programmes for individuals and support for individual families, pupils who have special educational needs and/or disabilities are making similar progress to their classmates. In many cases, they are outstripping the progress of their peers. Some individuals' attendance has improved and for those that have not, there are extenuating circumstances.
- You and your teachers have created an excellent learning environment in which all pupils feel safe in the knowledge that they will be supported in their learning and that it is alright to 'get it wrong'. Some parents who responded to the survey expressed concern that their children's needs are not always met. Evidence seen during the inspection does not wholly substantiate these concerns. However, like all of the school's improvement plans, there is a need to ensure that the individual plans for pupils reflect measurable progress targets. You will then be better able to assess the quality of the provision and the impact this has had on individual pupils' progress.

Next steps for the school

Leaders and those responsible for governance should ensure that:

- All plans for improvement are focused on pupils' outcomes so that the impact of leaders' decisions can be clearly evidenced and the progress of all groups of

pupils is carefully evaluated

- Any variation in pupils' outcomes within some classes and subjects is eradicated and pupils make good progress from their varying starting points
- Leaders' monitoring and subsequent actions are well evidenced and withstand rigorous scrutiny.

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

Yours sincerely

Ruth Brock
Her Majesty's Inspector

Information about the inspection

I met with you, your deputy headteacher, who also leads mathematics, and the subject leader for English to discuss progress since the previous inspection. In addition I spoke with your special educational needs coordinator to check on provision and outcomes for this group of pupils and the impact of adults' work. During the visit I met with a group of governors, including the chair of the governing body, and with a representative of the local authority. I also met with a group of 12 pupils chosen randomly from across the school. I scrutinised a variety of sources of information, including your self-evaluation, the school's plans for improvement and assessment information for all year groups. We met with the relevant staff to examine the school's safeguarding and child protection procedures, the records of checks leaders make on the suitability of staff to work with children and information relating to attendance. We both undertook observations of learning across the school, viewed work in pupils' books and spoke with pupils about their learning during lessons. I took account of the views of 15 staff and 53 pupils who responded to the online surveys. I also recorded 70 Parent View responses and 64 text messages.