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Mr Andrew Davies
Headteacher
Tarvin Primary School
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Dear Mr Davies

Short inspection of Tarvin Primary School

Following my visit to the school on 2 December 2015 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 in the school since the last inspection. You, staff and governors have a shared vision of high standards for every pupil at Tarvin. You are constantly reflecting on your practice to ensure that the provision for every pupil is effective. You provide pupils with a broad range of experiences which help them to enjoy their time at school, but also prepare them well for the next stage in their learning. You and your staff have maintained an extremely positive learning environment where pupils feel safe, confident and are able to learn well.

At the previous inspection, inspectors reported that the achievement of pupils and the quality of teaching was good. This continues to be the case. Pupils make good progress from their different starting points and the quality of teaching overall remains of a good standard. Inspectors also reported further strengths in pupils' behaviour and in the curriculum. Pupils' behaviour is exemplary both in and out of the classroom and the curriculum continues to provide pupils with a wide range of experiences which help to enhance their outcomes. Leaders and governors were also commended for the rapid improvements made at the time of the last inspection. I agree that you have maintained your dynamism and focus as headteacher and that governors support and challenge leaders well.

At the previous inspection, inspectors identified some areas for improvement. They asked leaders to:

- improve the rate of progress in writing, by improving the amount and quality of extended writing and by improving presentation and the use of grammar
- ensure that teachers plan work which challenges pupils of all abilities more clearly
- ensure that all marking is as good as the best
- evaluate the effectiveness of new teaching strategies.

Pupils' progress in writing has improved steadily since the last inspection. You acted quickly to address this issue and visited other schools, where writing was an area of strength, to seek ways to improve practice at Tarvin. There is now a systematic approach to the teaching of writing and teachers continually assess pupils' strengths and weaknesses in different types of writing. They then make sure that teaching is focused on improving areas of weakness and also ensure that pupils know how to improve.

You have also taken action to improve the quality of teaching. Teachers now plan lessons according to the abilities of most pupils, but sometimes the most-able pupils could be challenged more. The quality of marking has improved and pupils know what they have done well and what they need to do to improve. There is also strong evidence that you are evaluating the effectiveness of different strategies, such as the renewed approach to the teaching of writing and the subsequent improvements made in outcomes for pupils.

Safeguarding is effective.

Leaders have ensured that safeguarding arrangements are fit for purpose and are up to date. Systems to check the suitability of staff to work with children are robust. Annual audits are undertaken with the local authority to ensure that your procedures continue to be in line with requirements. Safer recruitment training has been completed by governors as well as senior leaders. Every child I spoke to said that they feel safe at all times in school. This view was shared by every parent who responded to the parental questionnaire. Pupils say that bullying is rare and when it does happen it is dealt with quickly. Pupils would be confident in speaking to an adult in school if they were worried about anything.

Inspection findings

- Leaders and governors are ambitious for all pupils and your vision for the school is shared by staff. Pupils are proud to attend the school and they love coming in every day because they are safe and happy. High expectations of behaviour permeate the school and pupils are polite and well mannered. Pupils say that they all get along with each other and that bullying is rare. The outcomes for pupils are enhanced strongly by the provision of after-school

clubs and by the regular trips arranged by staff which pupils really value and enjoy. The vast majority of pupils have attended an after-school club and most have represented the school in one way or another. Your annual exhibition provides an excellent opportunity for pupils to have an audience to display and talk about their work. All pupils are involved and the focus of the exhibition gives real purpose to their learning. It also establishes an excellent opportunity to engage with parents and the local community.

- Leaders and governors have a good understanding of the school's strengths and areas that need further development. The school's self-evaluation is accurate and action plans focus on the correct actions. For example, your actions to improve the teaching of writing have improved outcomes for pupils. You have rightly identified that not enough pupils passed the phonics check in Year 1 in 2015 and that pupils need to have more opportunities to solve problems and use reasoning in mathematics lessons. Although you are tackling these areas as a priority, we discussed how you should consider more closely the processes by which you and governors check on your progress towards achieving your targets.
- Leaders and governors pay careful attention to the progress made by disadvantaged pupils. Pupil premium funding is used well to support pupils in making strong progress. Pupils receive academic support and other support to help them overcome barriers to being successful learners. As a result, they make at least the same good progress as other pupils.
- Children make strong progress in the early years. They enter the school with skills that are broadly typical for their age; some children have skills that are below those expected and a growing number of children have skills above those expected. Children make strong progress and enter Year 1 ready to learn. Previous weaknesses in writing have been addressed and pupils now make strong progress in this important subject.
- In 2015, the proportion of pupils achieving the higher level in mathematics at the end of Key Stage 2 was lower than in reading and writing. As a result, you are making changes to the mathematics curriculum this year, including the introduction of more regular opportunities for pupils to use reasoning and problem solving to add challenge. Most-able pupils currently attend weekly sessions with a visiting teacher to challenge them at a higher level. These sessions are valued by pupils and they have to think really hard when completing activities involving reasoning and deep problem solving. We discussed how reasoning and problem solving activities will provide more challenge for all pupils, including the most-able. We also discussed how the challenge for most-able pupils in mathematics should become more consistent throughout the school.
- You are making changes to the teaching of phonics for younger pupils. Sessions observed during the inspection showed that where these changes are becoming embedded, pupils are excited and engaged in the activities and are learning new sounds at pace and in a systematic way. Increasing the proportion of pupils who pass the phonics check in Year 1 was rightly included in your action plan for 2015/2016. Your records show that improvements are

already being made as a result of your new approach to the teaching of phonics.

- You appreciate the support and monitoring that you receive from the local authority. This is appropriately 'light touch' given that the local authority confirms that you continue to demonstrate the strong capacity to lead the school to its next stage.

Next steps for the school

Leaders and governors should ensure that:

- most-able pupils are challenged appropriately in mathematics in every class
- all pupils have more regular opportunities to complete reasoning and problem solving activities in mathematics
- the impact of planned improvements is monitored more forensically so that leaders and governors can better evaluate progress towards targets.

Yours sincerely

Ian Hardman
Her Majesty's Inspector

Information about the inspection

During the inspection, I met with you, your deputy, the mathematics leader, two governors, a group of eight pupils and the person responsible for maintaining safeguarding records. I also had a telephone conversation with a representative from the local authority. I spoke with other pupils informally, both in and out of classrooms. I looked at a wide range of documentation including the school's self-evaluation, action plans, documents relating to safeguarding and information relating to pupils' progress. I visited classrooms to observe pupils' learning and to speak with them about their work. I also considered the views of 36 parents who completed the online Parent View questionnaire and another parent who contacted the school to speak with me directly.