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Julie Kelly
Headteacher
West Meon Church of England Voluntary Controlled Primary School
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Dear Ms Kelly

Short inspection of West Meon Church of England Voluntary Controlled Primary School

Following my visit to the school on 2 February 2016, 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 2011.

This school continues to be good.

The leadership team has maintained the good quality of education in the school since the previous inspection. You provide strong and consistent leadership for pupils, staff and parents. You know that the community values the school and you ensure that the school reaches out into the community. There are strong links with Saint John the Evangelist Church and the school choir is proud to sing at the local care home. You have made valuable changes to provide pupils with broader experiences and greater opportunities. Your commitment to increase competitive sport is recognised by the recent award of the School Games Mark at Silver level. Parents and pupils are keen to share their appreciation of the range of activities available, such as chess club, street dancing and drama.

The school is a caring community that values every pupil. You aim to prepare pupils for the future by developing 'five minds'. For example, pupils are encouraged to express their own ideas using their 'creating mind'. Staff know every pupil well and these strong relationships are beneficial. One pupil said, 'teachers really care for us, so it is easy to trust them'.

Pupils behave well, work hard and show care for one another. They take pride in their work and strive to have their best efforts recognised in the 'boom book'. Older pupils act as peer mentors and provide activities for the youngest children to enjoy at playtimes. The school community welcomes each new pupil; pupils are proud to introduce their newest friends and share ways that they have helped them to settle in quickly. You promote equal opportunities well and teach pupils to respect each other's differences. Pupils enjoy school and parents agree that this is the case.

You have ensured that all pupils make good progress from their starting points. Last year, at the end of Year 6, the proportion of pupils making and exceeding expected progress was close to national averages in reading, writing and mathematics. In 2015, the large majority of pupils met the expected standard in the Year 1 phonics check. Pupils' achievement in reading, writing and mathematics was significantly above the national average at the end of Key Stage 1. Disadvantaged pupils and pupils who have special educational needs or disability achieve as well as their classmates. Nevertheless, you rightly recognise that pupils' attainment can be further increased. Last year, not enough children achieved a good level of development at the end of the Reception Year. At the end of Key Stage 2 in 2015, the proportion of pupils reaching the standards expected for their age in writing and grammar, punctuation and spelling was below the national average. Your improvement plans are well focused to tackle these aspects of the school's work.

At the previous inspection, inspectors identified two areas for improvement. You have effectively addressed both of these. Pupils have regular opportunities to learn about different cultures because you have made important changes to the curriculum. Topics such as 'homes' enable pupils to compare the way that people live across the world. Special events such as 'Africa week' and regular communications with a twin school, Mayhoro School in Uganda, help pupils to recognise similarities and differences with a contrasting culture. Furthermore, you have adapted the curriculum to allow pupils to identify how other cultures fit into and make up modern Britain through topics such as 'the best of British'. As a result, pupils are well prepared for life in modern Britain. You have also ensured that the most-able pupils make good progress in writing. Across all year groups, every pupil has regular opportunities to write at length with weekly 'wizard writing'. The most-able pupils benefit from additional challenges, such as writing the blog for the Mayhoro school and contributing to the parish newsletter. As a result of this work, pupils' achievement has risen. Last year, the proportion of pupils achieving standards above those expected for their age at the end of Key Stage 2 in writing was similar to that for reading for the first time. In 2015, more pupils reached the higher level in writing at the end of Year 2.

Safeguarding is effective.

You are proactive in ensuring that safeguarding practices are thorough and up to date. Governors support you well and keep a close eye on this important part of the school's work. Leaders and governors regularly review safeguarding policies and make necessary changes. For example, following recent training about radicalisation, the curriculum has been amended to allow the oldest pupils to reflect on a range of opinions and opposing views. As a result of careful induction, regular training and updates, staff know their responsibilities and what to do if they are worried about a child. You make effective use of partners and the school's own emotional learning support assistant to promote pupils' well-being. You check that pupils attend school regularly and follow up any concerns diligently because you know that poor attendance reduces pupils' learning. Consequently, attendance continues to be above the national average. Pupils feel safe at school and can describe a number of ways that they learn how to stay safe. Indeed, on the day of the inspection, pupils relished a visit from the fire service and delighted in the sirens!

Inspection findings

- Leaders and governors have high aspirations for the school. This is reflected in the school's ambitious improvement plans. You have worked closely with a representative from the local authority to check that your understanding of the school's effectiveness is accurate and your action plan is correctly focused. Incisive advice from the local authority representative has ensured that you provide governors with a termly review of the progress that you are making against the improvement plan. Consequently, governors are able to evaluate the impact of your work and hold leaders to account with greater rigour.
- At the start of this year, you introduced a new leadership structure. The two new senior leaders have set to work quickly to support improvements. For example, the leader of Key Stage 1 and early years provision has successfully led the school to the achievement of the Healthy Schools Award. The leader of Key Stage 2 and English carries out regular checks on teaching and learning and ensures that pupils have opportunities to write for different purposes across a range of subjects. Both leaders have made good use of external support to strengthen assessment practice and increase their knowledge and understanding of their roles.
- Governors challenge leaders well to improve the school. For example, they have ensured that the areas for improvement identified at the previous inspection have been addressed. Governors have a range of relevant experience and use their skills well to provide support to leaders. The governing body is not complacent and regularly evaluates its own effectiveness. Governors have an action plan to address any shortcomings. Consequently, governance is very effective.

- Pupils in Reception and pupils in Years 1 and 2 have daily lessons in phonics (letters and the sounds they make). As a result of this regular practice, the proportion of pupils in Year 1 reaching the expected standard in phonics is similar to the national average. However, leaders have not always set high enough expectations for pupils' learning in phonics. Although teachers check that individual pupils make progress, there are no clear targets for each year group and leaders do not routinely evaluate how well pupils are on track to meet these ambitions. Furthermore, work in reading and writing is not always challenging enough for children in the early years provision.
- Teachers have embraced changes to the curriculum and assessment procedures and use them well to ensure that pupils make good progress. They have a sound understanding of the subjects that they teach and use this knowledge to correctly identify what pupils need to learn next. For example, in Year 6, pupils' understanding of ratio and proportion was effectively extended when they were asked to adjust recipes to make different amounts. Pupils were keen to try the cheese scones for themselves at home! However, teachers do not always make the best use of lesson time. Sometimes tasks are not sufficiently challenging and opportunities to apply and extend pupils' knowledge of phonics are not exploited well enough.
- Pupils read well. As they move through the school, pupils demonstrate increasing confidence, understanding and enjoyment when reading. Pupils use a range of techniques to support themselves when they meet an unfamiliar word. However, pupils do not readily use phonics to help them work out difficult words.
- Topics chosen for are motivating and interesting for pupils. Recently, pupils have enjoyed writing about Tim Peake's adventures in outer space. Pupils' work in books and assessment information show that current pupils are making good progress in writing. However, pupils do not yet routinely choose to use their phonics to spell unfamiliar words. As a result, pupils' attainment in grammar, punctuation and spelling is lower than that of others nationally.
- Children in the early years provision get off to a good start. Adults take time to know about each child and use this information well to support their learning. Consequently, children make good progress from their starting points. Last year, there was little variation in rates of progress across the different areas of learning. The leader has made some changes to strengthen checks on children's development. Children who join the school are welcomed through a range of activities. The teacher visits children at home and establishes valuable relationships with families from the start. The teacher also visits the settings that children attend before starting school to find out more about each child. A new member of staff is working closely with the teacher to help carry out regular checks on children's learning and provide further opportunities for their development. Nevertheless, leaders have not ensured that an effective system is in place to evaluate regularly whether children in the Reception Year are on track to achieve a good level of development.

- Pupils' social, moral, spiritual and cultural understanding is very well developed. The school's Christian values such as respect and courage link very well with British values. The diocese has provided helpful support to leaders to ensure that pupils have regular opportunities to learn about the values through stories such as 'The Good Samaritan'. Pupils show that they understand these values by applying them to their daily lives. A Year 4 pupil showed courage as he tackled a mathematics investigation involving equivalent fractions. He stated with determination: 'I haven't found a solution...yet'.

Next steps for the school

Leaders and those responsible for governance should ensure that:

- more teaching is consistently outstanding by ensuring that teachers make the best use of lesson time
- the rigorous and systematic teaching of phonics is embedded, so that pupils can apply their skills to reading and writing unfamiliar words
- expectations of what children can achieve in the early years provision are raised and their progress is evaluated more frequently.

I am copying this letter to the Chair of the Governing Body, the Director of Education for the Diocese of Portsmouth, the Regional Schools Commissioner and the Director of Children's Services for Hampshire County Council. This letter will be published on the Ofsted website.

Yours sincerely

Caroline Dulon
Her Majesty's Inspector

Information about the inspection

I met with you, the leader for early years and phonics, the leaders for English, the vice-chair and two members of the Governing Body, and a representative of the local authority. I spoke on the telephone to a representative of the diocese. We observed teaching and learning in four lessons. I listened to pupils reading. We scrutinised pupils' work together. I observed pupils' behaviour at playtime and around the school. I spoke to pupils about their experiences and views of school. I took account of 24 responses by parents to Ofsted's online questionnaire, Parent View, 13 responses to the pupil questionnaire and one response to the staff questionnaire. I also spoke to 10 parents at the start of the day. I analysed a range of the school's documentation, including information about pupils' achievement, the school improvement plan, safeguarding checks, policies and procedures. We discussed your own evaluation of the school's effectiveness.