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Mrs B Ball
Executive Headteacher
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Dear Mrs Ball

Short inspection of Sherston CE Primary School

Following my visit to the school on 23 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 June 2011.

This school continues to be good.

Despite the school experiencing what some parents describe as a 'changing of the guard', the good quality of education in the school has been maintained since the previous inspection. Teachers are ensuring that pupils receive positive learning experiences which will provide them with the necessary skills for the next stage of their education.

- Since your arrival in September 2015, you have visibly demonstrated your high aspirations for the school and your dogged determination that pupils should be in receipt of a high-quality education.
- Together, you and your acting headteacher are resolute in your determination to ensure that the school moves at pace on its journey to outstanding. You are ambitious for the school and your aspirations are shared by staff and governors.
- You have quickly identified the many strengths of the school but also those areas that need to improve. For example, you are aware that the effective leadership of teaching remains a priority so that pupils make the very best progress, especially for the most-able mathematicians.
- You rightly consider the training and development of your staff to be integral to the success of the school. Teachers, many of whom are new to the profession, appreciate the opportunity to develop their skills. You are outward-looking and are constantly seeking out good practice for them to observe and use in their own teaching. This is ensuring that teaching is

effective in securing good progress for all pupils, including those pupils who have special educational needs.

- Pupils describe how they are happy at school and enjoy the many varied learning experiences they receive. This is reflected in their regular attendance. They feel well supported by their teachers and know that if they have any worries there is always an adult who can help them.
- Many parents speak positively about the changes made since your arrival. In particular, they welcome the introduction of 'stay and play', which is helping them see first-hand the activities their children complete in school. You know there is more work to be done in communicating to parents the changes you are making and the impact these are having on the progress of their children.

Safeguarding is effective.

There is a shared culture of ensuring that pupils are kept safe. Staff and governors receive regular training, and those with responsibility for safeguarding make sure they hold up-to-date qualifications at the appropriate level. Leaders, including governors, have a clear understanding of their new duties, such as the government's approach to the prevention of extremism and keeping pupils safe from the risks of radicalisation.

Pupils describe how they are taught to keep safe, including e-safety. Consequently, they understand the associated risks of sharing information online and with people they do not know.

The school works closely with other agencies and services to minimise the possibility of harm to any pupil. All of the safeguarding documents, records, processes and procedures are detailed and of high quality.

Inspection findings

- You lead the school with rigour and fortitude. You have a clear focus on driving forward improvements to ensure that all pupils make the best possible progress. You have not shied away from quickly tackling the weaknesses you have identified.
- Your self-evaluation is accurate. You know exactly which areas are successful and which you need to improve. In particular, you and your leaders recognise that while achievement of pupils is good across the school in reading, writing and mathematics, more pupils should make stronger progress, especially the most-able mathematicians. The evidence of this visit is that you are taking effective action to bring about these improvements rapidly.
- There has been a significant change in the structure of the governing body since the previous inspection. This provided the opportunity to review the way that individual governors work so that new members were allocated roles and responsibilities that complement their skills.

Consequently, the governing body possess a good range of experience and expertise.

- Governance is effective. Governors ensure that the interim leader of the school is of the highest quality. They know the school well and challenge you as a matter of course. Like you, they are not afraid to tackle weaknesses in the performance of the school to ensure that pupils receive the best. Governors are working closely with the diocese and local authority to secure the permanent leadership of the school.
- You have set up new procedures for managing the performance of teachers. The checks you have made on the quality of teaching have swiftly identified areas which need refining. Consequently, the quality of teaching is rapidly improving. Nevertheless, you are aware that further development is required to ensure that pupils make the best possible progress, especially in mathematics.
- You are pivotal in developing the leadership skills of teachers and have quickly gained their confidence. Subject leaders are knowledgeable about the subjects they lead and are confident in providing guidance to their colleagues. They are appreciative of the high-quality training they are receiving. This is giving them the necessary skills and confidence to carry out their responsibilities to good effect.
- You have a strong and committed teaching team. Team members strive to ensure that all pupils do as well as they can. Pupils explained how they appreciate the hard work of their teachers and their determination to provide them with the necessary skills for their future as learners. For example, pupils welcome the effective guidance they are given to improve their work. They value the time they are given to respond to the guidance, resulting in them making better progress. This strong progress was clearly evident in the writing viewed in Year 6. Pupils are able to produce high-quality writing across a variety of styles, including creative and report writing. This strong progress in writing is typical across the school.
- Throughout the school, you ensure that staff are using information about what pupils can and cannot do much better now to plan the next learning steps for individual pupils. This ensures that activities planned move pupils' learning forward, enabling them to make good progress.
- At the time of the previous inspection, the school was asked to use time more efficiently in lessons so that pupils have enough time to practise skills and complete tasks. Teachers were also asked to check learning during lessons so that adjustments are made when pupils find the work too hard or too easy. Inspection evidence shows that this has been effectively tackled. Teachers plan lessons that challenge pupils, igniting their interest and curiosity. For example, in a Year 6 mathematics lesson, pupils demonstrated their resilience in tackling challenging activities on converting units of measurement and exploring the law of distribution. They worked well together, showing how they are able to effectively and accurately use and apply their mathematical skills.

- The teaching of reading is effective, allowing pupils to make good progress. For example, in a Year 1 PSHE lesson, pupils were able to read the instructions confidently and with accuracy, demonstrating their good knowledge of phonics (letters and the sounds that they make).
- The small number of disadvantaged pupils are making good progress in their learning. This is as a result of teachers having the same high expectations of all pupils, irrespective of their starting points or backgrounds. This strong progress clearly demonstrates how additional funding is spent shrewdly.
- A high proportion of parents are delighted with the care, guidance and support their children receive. They describe how there has been a 'shift in culture' but believe that the school has not been 'turned on its head'. However, you are aware that you need to strengthen communication with parents so that they are aware of any proposed changes and the rationale behind decisions made.

Next steps for the school

Leaders and governors should ensure that:

- the focus on the leadership of teaching and learning remains a priority so that a higher proportion of pupils make outstanding progress, especially in mathematics
- communication for parents is strengthened in order that they have a good understanding of the rationale behind changes being made, and the impact it has on the quality of education their children are receiving.

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

Yours sincerely

Jen Southall
Her Majesty's Inspector

Information about the inspection

During the inspection visit, I met with you, the acting headteacher and governors, including the Chair of the Governing Body. I had a telephone conversation with an officer from the local authority. In particular, I looked at the safeguarding policies and procedures in detail and your work to ensure the regular attendance of your pupils. I had a telephone call with the local authority designated officer for safeguarding. Together, you, the acting headteacher and I visited every class to

observe teaching and look at pupils' work. I spoke with parents at the start of the day. I looked at the results from 'Parent View', Ofsted's online questionnaire, and considered the comments provided by text message. Informally, I spoke to pupils during the day to gather their views about the school. I observed pupils' behaviour at playtime. I appraised the accuracy of your evaluation of the school's performance and your school development plan, along with other documentation.