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22 March 2016

Mrs S Lockwood
Headteacher
The Beacon Church of England (VA) Primary School
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Dear Mrs Lockwood

Short inspection of The Beacon Church of England (VA) 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.

The leadership team has maintained the good quality of education in the school since the previous inspection. In this small school, all teachers have a leadership role. Under your skilled leadership, they have a shared enthusiasm and ambition to help pupils achieve the best they can.

With the support of all the staff and parents, you have created a family-friendly, harmonious school where pupils feel happy and safe. There is a clear sense of purpose to provide a rounded education for pupils. The school's successful focus on developing pupils' skills and understanding in mathematics and English is balanced well with pupils developing their skills in creative subjects such as music and art. As a result, pupils make good progress in a wide range of subjects and are well prepared for their secondary education when they leave the school.

The governing body is a considerable strength of the school community. Governors have a wide range of expertise and experience. They share with you and your staff a sense of purpose on how the school can improve. Governors are highly effective in challenging and supporting you, helping to ensure that funds are maximised to support pupils' learning and personal development.

You and the governing body have successfully used the previous inspection report as a basis for important improvements. The school's self-evaluation, conducted by leaders at all levels and the governing body, is accurate and tightly focused on what

needs to be done to bring about improvement. For example, staff have worked hard to improve boys' writing so that it is of the same high standard as that of the girls. Although this gap is narrowing, you are aware that it needs to be reduced still further. Last year's whole-school focus on improving spelling, punctuation and grammar has led to significantly accelerated progress for most pupils in English in all year groups. You have changed the way that the school assesses and tracks pupils' progress and attainment. This has improved the quality of information that the school has about the pupils.

Those pupils who are entitled to extra funding through the pupil premium generally make the same progress as their peers. The money is carefully used. Examples include providing extra support in lessons, individual pupils attending external activities and pupils having specialist lessons, such as musical instrumental tuition. Pupils with special educational needs or disabilities are also effectively supported. As an action arising from the school development plan, you are finding ways to accelerate the progress that these pupils make still further through earlier identification of needs and even speedier provision of interventions.

The research work that the school has conducted with other education providers has helped to refine teaching. As part of this work, the mathematics lead teacher began working closely with teacher colleagues last year. This collaborative work ensured that the new mathematics curriculum was standardised and implemented systematically throughout the school. It has been very effective in improving the quality of the teaching and assessment of mathematics because it has raised staff knowledge and confidence. The new approach has helped pupils to be confident to ask questions and to challenge each other in helpful and supportive ways. Pupils relish being challenged to think more deeply about their learning. They greatly value the support they get from their teachers. This is clearly seen in the way they improve their work as a result of following their teachers' advice in all subjects.

Safeguarding is effective.

There is a strong, shared culture to ensure that pupils are kept safe. All staff and governors receive regular training on health and safety and on safeguarding at the appropriate level. The high number of staff and governors trained to the top levels for safeguarding enables you to support and challenge each other to ensure best practice. You and other leaders keep up to date with the latest guidance from the Department of Education and others. Consequently, you and other adults at the school have a clear understanding of your duties, such as keeping pupils safe from the risks of radicalisation and harm.

Pupils know how to keep themselves safe. Experts in safety regularly visit the school. Pupils appreciate these visits and the work they do in their personal, social and health education lessons. They showed me that they have learned how to react responsibly if they receive inappropriate emails or contacts through social media sites. They also learn how to keep themselves safe on the beach through visits to it, supported most successfully by school staff and, at times, expert lifeguards.

The school works very effectively with other organisations and services to ensure the safety of pupils and to increase pupils' attendance. All of the safeguarding records and systems used by the school are appropriate and efficiently executed.

Inspection findings

- Building on the 'good' judgement at the previous inspection, you, the staff and governors have shown a great determination to bring about further improvements. Staff are firmly held to account for the quality of their teaching and you provide regular good-quality training for them. You are, rightly, investigating ways that more leadership opportunities can be created to further increase class teachers' professional development.
- Visits to classrooms, pupils' work and the school's records show that the quality of learning is routinely and firmly good or better. The new ways of teaching and assessing pupils' work are helping pupils to really develop their understanding more deeply in English and mathematics. You have rightly identified that more consistent application of this approach in all subjects would raise achievement further throughout the school.
- Teachers provide work that is carefully matched to what the pupils already know, understand and can do. This is because all staff closely monitor throughout the lesson what pupils have learned and what they are struggling with. This information is carefully recorded and then used well by the class teacher to make sure that the next piece of work builds on previous learning and effectively develops the pupils' knowledge and understanding.
- A greater proportion of girls than boys leave the Reception Year with the level of skills and knowledge expected for their age. This reflects the differences in their starting points when they join the school. You and the reception staff are actively trying to find different ways to accelerate boys' developmental progress. For example, topics such as 'dinosaurs' and 'space' have proved to be more effective at motivating boys and the use of a 'story teller' is improving their listening and speaking skills. Girls also continue to enjoy their learning through these initiatives.
- You build on children's early reading skills well so that the proportion of pupils who meet the expected standard in the phonics check in Year 1 remains above the national average.
- Every pupil leaves the school being able to play at least one instrument. Most play more than one and a significant proportion effectively play more than two. Dance is also a significant strength throughout the school. Pupils successfully take part in a wide range of sporting activities and competitions.
- Pupils who act as 'cultural champions' have helped raise awareness of different races and cultures throughout the school. Visits from people of different faiths and beliefs, such as humanists, have enabled pupils to learn to respect people who are different from themselves and have other beliefs and ways of living. The pupils told me how much they enjoyed the opportunities to hear from visitors and to be able to question them about their views and lives.
- Pupils' moral and social development continues to be a strength. Pupils are typically happy to come to school because they enjoy each other's company and are kind to each other during lessons and at play times. Bullying is rare.

Pupils and parents reported that any disputes between pupils are quickly and effectively resolved.

- Clubs at lunchtimes and after school are very popular and much appreciated by pupils and parents. Pupils are able to extend their music and sporting skills as well as trying new activities such as rock-climbing and knitting. The before- and after-school care helps parents to keep in close contact with the school outside of school hours and helps them keep their children safe.

Next steps for the school

Leaders and those responsible for governance should ensure that:

- teachers continue to reduce the attainment gaps between girls and boys, particularly in writing and at the start of Year 1
- teachers build on the success they have had in teaching and use of assessment in mathematics and English by using the same methods in other subjects
- they continue to provide opportunities for enhanced leadership roles for teaching staff and for staff to be able to share best practice.

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

Yours sincerely

Steffi Penny
Her Majesty's Inspector

Information about the inspection

During this inspection, I met with you, other leaders, members of the governing body and parents. I spoke with and observed pupils during lessons and at playtimes. I had a meeting with a sample of 25 pupils covering each year group. I considered the 11 responses to the Ofsted pupil questionnaire and the school's own analysis of 87 pupils' attitudes towards themselves and their school. I scrutinised the quality of pupils' work on my own and with you. I took account of the 21 responses to the Ofsted staff survey and the views of 26 staff from the school's own staff survey. I considered the 76 responses by parents to Ofsted's online questionnaire, Parent View.

A wide range of documentary evidence was considered, including records relating to safeguarding, the curriculum and assessment as well as the school's analysis of teaching, learning, attendance and behaviour.