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Mrs S Julyan
Headteacher
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Dear Mrs Julyan

Short inspection of Torre Church of England Academy

Following my visit to the school on 24 May 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 predecessor school was judged to be good in June 2013.

This school continues to be good.

The leadership team has maintained the good quality of education since the school converted to academy status.

Following your appointment as headteacher 12 months ago, you helped to organise an external review of the governing body. The school has benefited from this greatly. Governors are visiting the school more often to see how well pupils are learning. They are using more first-hand evidence to monitor and check the information that you and other school leaders provide for them. They now involve themselves in key meetings and consider issues that need to be pursued in follow-up meetings. In particular, they ensure that pupils are well prepared for life in modern Britain. A strong focus is placed on anti-racism and the development of pupils' respect and understanding of the heritage and beliefs of others, while maintaining the school's Christian ethos. However, the governing body needs to ensure that the school's website and policies contain all the information required by the Department for Education.

You are right in describing the Nursery as a happy, safe, caring and stimulating environment – a place where all children can play, learn and develop together. You ensure that play activities in the Nursery and Reception Years are purposeful and help children to develop as fully-rounded individuals. An increasing number of parents also benefit from attending the stay and play sessions. A higher than average proportion of children who completed Reception achieved a good level of

development in 2015. There are currently no learning gaps in the early years between disadvantaged pupils and their classmates, or between girls and boys.

The proportion of pupils who reach the expected standard in the national phonics (the sounds that letters make) check at the end of Year 1 remains below that seen nationally. However, this represents good progress from where these pupils were in their understanding of phonics when they started school. There is, nevertheless, some inconsistency in the quality of phonics teaching and the way that pupils record what they are learning. The school has ensured that teachers get to see each other teach and learn from each other, sharing the best practice in this and other schools. We agreed that the next step would be to do the same for teaching assistants, particularly in terms of extending the quality of their support to further improve pupils' phonic skills.

Pupils' attainment in reading, writing and mathematics at the end of Year 2 and Year 6 is at, or above, that of their peers nationally. Pupils' books for these subjects are neat and tidy. These books also show that, if they are away, pupils catch up on work missed. It is clear to see that pupils, regardless of background, gender or special educational need, typically make good progress during their time in school and in all year groups. The most able pupils also typically make good progress. In other curriculum areas where pupils are taught through the 'self organised learning experiences' (SOLE), work missed is not always caught up as assiduously and pupils' targets in literacy and numeracy are not as well considered as they should be. The leaders for English and mathematics are playing an important role in ensuring that pupils make good progress, and they are helping other adults learn from their expertise. We discussed how they, and other subject leaders, could help drive improvement in pupils' achievement further. This could be, for example, by monitoring the work of teaching assistants more closely and devising harder questions for the most able pupils to potentially use in SOLE lessons.

Safeguarding is effective.

The staff, especially you as the designated safeguarding lead, are rigorous in the pursuit of any safeguarding issues. Attendance is monitored effectively and absences are followed up so that parents make sure that pupils attend school as often as they can.

You and others with responsibility for safeguarding hold up-to-date qualifications at the required level. There are safeguarding updates every time there is a staff meeting. Staff help to ensure that pupils are kept safe from potential risks of radicalisation, extremism and child exploitation. Staff have been given training on female genital mutilation, and know the signs to look out for. However, there is no mention of it in the school's safeguarding policy.

The school works closely with other agencies and services to ensure the safety of pupils and staff. The case files are well organised and explain the chronological process of actions taken and who has been involved, complete with further actions to follow.

- The governing body regularly checks that staff correctly implement the school's safeguarding policies.
- The chair of the governing body has a background in health and safety. He regularly undertakes reviews of the school's buildings and grounds. He is rigorous in his identification and assessment of possible risks.
- Pupils know how to keep themselves safe. For example, they know what to do if someone they do not really know tries to make contact with them in the street or through the internet.
- All of the safeguarding documents, processes and procedures are appropriate, recorded clearly and effectively applied.

Inspection findings

- You and the governing body are very ambitious for the school. You have gained the support and respect of staff, parents and pupils. This was evidenced in the highly positive outcomes of the surveys. You have helped inspire a learning culture. Everyone is keen to do better and do the best for the school. The school council plays an important role in making a difference to their school.
- The 'early years pupil premium project' is a great success. Careful thought has been given to provide targeted activities and work that are improving the life chances for these children. For example, the book bags that children are given, containing stationery items and home reading books, enable families to support their children's learning at home without spending their own money.
- Children who join the school with little language skills or with English as an additional language make swift progress in developing their communication skills. By the time they join the Reception Year, they can make themselves understood and have a good grasp of the English language.
- The special educational needs coordinator (SENCo), building on the work done by the early years leaders, astutely identifies strengths and weaknesses in pupils' personal development. Her detailed records allow staff to focus on the areas where pupils most need extra support. For some pupils, additional support is needed for them to be emotionally ready to learn. The Harbour, a room dedicated to improving weaknesses in pupils' personal development, is successfully used by the SENCo to increase these pupils' emotional resilience. However, we discussed that it would be helpful to her if other staff also monitored how those pupils who use the Harbour develop their play and social skills at breaktimes.
- Family learning and support is a strong feature of the school's work. For example, there is a homework club that parents and their children can attend together. In addition, regular courses are provided for parents during the school day, with a free crèche providing care for babies and pre-school children. Popular courses have been: 'story boxes – lifting the lid on storytelling'; 'keeping up with the children'; and 'fun with numbers'. There are also regular family support drop-in sessions with specialists from

- health organisations and the Citizens Advice Bureau.
- Pupils enjoy a good range of extra-curricular activities and trips. Year 6 pupils are excited about flying to London by aeroplane as part of their residential trip this year.
 - School lunches are healthy and nutritious. The school provides hot and cold food, including a school prepared 'packed lunch' with a wide range of options from which pupils can choose.
 - Pupils can use the 'chill room' at lunchtime if they want to stay indoors and play with board games. There are a good range of spaces outdoors where pupils can play. Pupils enjoy their roles as play leaders.

Next steps for the school

Leaders and those responsible for governance should ensure that:

- teaching assistants receive more training and guidance so that they support pupils' learning even more, particularly in phonics
- staff monitor, particularly at breaktimes, how pupils who use the Harbour develop their play and social skills
- subject leaders continue to share their expertise and drive improvement in pupils' achievement for their area of responsibility
- the school's website and policies contain all the information required by the Department for Education.

I am copying this letter to the chair of the governing body, the director of education for the diocese of Exeter, the regional schools commissioner and the director of children's services for Torbay. 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 school leaders, members of the governing body, pupils and a group of parents taking part in a family learning course. Together, we observed pupils in all of the classes, the different phonics groups and the youngest pupils in the Harbour room. I scrutinised the quality of pupils' work. I watched pupils at play and at lunchtime. I took account of the responses to staff and pupil surveys, and those by parents to Ofsted's online questionnaire, Parent View.

A wide range of documentary evidence was considered, including records relating to safeguarding, the impact of teaching on learning, the curriculum and assessment information.