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Mrs Gina Finch
Executive Headteacher
Parkham Primary School
Parkham
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Dear Mrs Finch

Short inspection of Parkham Primary School

Following my visit to the school on 12 July 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 November 2010.

This school continues to be good.

The leadership team has maintained the good quality of education in the school since the last inspection.

Since taking up your appointment in September 2013, you have taken decisive action to strengthen the impact of your school's work. A decline in pupil numbers gave you and the school's governing body considerable challenges. The decision to provide pre-school provision has been well received and future pupil numbers look positive as a result. Your work with parents has ensured that your vision for excellence is shared equally by them, staff, governors and pupils. This has made the school a harmonious place where pupils feel secure, confident and happy.

You have developed a strong leadership team across the Flying Start Federation, a partnership between Buckland Brewer and Parkham Primary schools. The school's arrangements for managing the performance of teachers helps improve teaching as well as holding teachers stringently to account for the quality of their work. You are supported well by the strong governing body in implementing these arrangements. You and your staff carefully track the progress of individual pupils to ensure they receive the teaching they need to make good progress. This careful analysis and well-matched provision ensures that no pupil is disadvantaged. Any pupil who is at risk of falling behind is quickly given extra help.

In addition to promoting a culture where everyone is encouraged and helped to improve, you ensure that pupils' health and well-being are suitably provided for.

Your recent 'mile a day' challenge has motivated pupils to keep active. Parents and pupils are appreciative of the wide range of after-school clubs.

At the time of the previous inspection, the school was asked to raise standards in pupils' writing and to develop their vocabulary and punctuation skills. Teachers have worked hard to make sure that pupils have the knowledge, skills and understanding they need to write effectively. Pupils' extensive reading means that they can draw upon a broad vocabulary to write in a way that engages the reader. The independent writing of the most able pupils reflects a sophisticated use of punctuation and grammar to good effect. Leaders have provided staff training to be sure that teachers are competent in teaching the punctuation requirements of the new national curriculum. Teachers have helped pupils to use punctuation more precisely and this has improved the technical accuracy of their writing. When occasional mistakes occur, teachers quickly identify them and pupils conscientiously improve their work.

The previous inspection report also highlighted the need to improve pupils' knowledge and understanding of the different faiths and cultures to be found in other parts of the United Kingdom and globally. Your broad and far-reaching religious education and personal, social, health, moral and economic education programmes have been effective in tackling this issue. Your links with a school in Uganda, including reciprocal staff visits, have helped pupils to gain an understanding of the similarities, but also inequalities, that exist in the world. Pupils are highly reflective about matters of personal responsibility and belief. Consequently, they behave well, take responsibility for their learning and are respectful of the views of others.

Safeguarding is effective.

You and your governors are rigorous in implementing the school's agreed safeguarding policies and procedures. You place a strong emphasis on maintaining robust safeguarding arrangements. All staff receive the training they need to be able to recognise and act on signs of risk or possible harm. Staff provide high levels of professional care and ensure that pupils feel safe and are safe. The school's behaviour policy is comprehensive and well understood. Pupils respond well to the rewards in place, behave well and say that they feel safe and well looked after in school.

Leaders have made sure that safeguarding procedures are fit for purpose. Governors are diligent in checking the school's procedures, such as confirming that all the necessary checks are made before staff start work in the school. Recruitment records and induction procedures are thorough and well documented. As a result, new staff are well prepared to follow school policies that deliver the high standards of care that leaders demand.

Inspection findings

- Governors have a good understanding of the school. They have been forward-thinking and outward-looking in their approach. This thinking has

provided strong strategic direction and supported you in tackling budgetary challenges. Governors make sure that the school's website is compliant with statutory requirements. Minutes of governing body meetings reflect a relentless challenge to leaders and a desire for continued improvement. Nonetheless, the targets set out in the school's action plans are not precise enough to help governors make systematic checks on the school's performance.

- Subject leaders play a vital role in moving the school forward. Their strong subject knowledge, coaching of staff and close checks on the work in pupils' books have helped to improve the quality of teaching, learning and assessment. Consequently, standards of achievement have risen. However, subject leaders' plans for further improvement sometimes lack clarity.
- Younger pupils benefit from strong teaching of phonics (letters and the sounds they make) which has helped them to read well and spell with increasing accuracy. This work begins in the early years and helps children to acquire the phonics knowledge they need to learn to read and write increasingly complex words. Inconsistencies in teaching in some year groups have been ironed out. In all years, pupils apply their good knowledge of spellings whenever they write.
- Leaders have ensured that a well-stocked and attractive library provides an enticing area which encourages pupils to read. The school places great emphasis on reading skills and comprehension. In the early years, children quickly develop their confidence, are inquisitive and enjoy books. Teachers make well-considered choices about books to inspire pupils and ignite their interest. Teachers challenge all pupils, including the most able, to tackle books that stretch and develop their reading. Pupils produce imaginative and thought-provoking writing based on their reading.
- Pupils who have special educational needs and/or disabilities are making good progress as the support they receive is well matched to their needs. Carefully planned programmes are effective in helping them to develop strategies to be successful. This has led to an improvement in standards, particularly in reading.
- Historically, the school's results in mathematics have been weaker than in English. However, this gap is now closing as standards in mathematics rise. The new mathematics leader has successfully introduced the new national curriculum. She has supported teachers in developing their subject knowledge. Pupils' basic mathematical skills are good and they have a strong grasp of number facts. However, leaders recognise that pupils do not use their reasoning skills often enough to challenge their thinking and deepen their learning. This is particularly the case for the most able mathematicians. The school has trialled some very effective strategies with pupils in Years 1, 2 and 3, encouraging them to explain their thinking confidently. This is less well developed for pupils in Years 4, 5 and 6.

- In the past, some groups of pupils did not attend school regularly and arrived late. Strategies to improve this have been very effective. Attendance for all groups of pupils is now above the national average.
- Parents are very happy with the education that their children receive. As one parent reported, 'I am very happy that my children are making good progress with their education in this very well-managed school'.

Next steps for the school

Leaders and those responsible for governance should ensure that:

- the school's action plans include measurable success criteria that can be used to evaluate the progress and impact of each action being taken
- work planned for the most able mathematicians fully develops their conceptual understanding and reasoning skills in line with the new mathematics national curriculum.

I am copying this letter to the chair of the governing body, the regional schools commissioner and the director of children's services for Devon. This letter will be published on the Ofsted website.

Yours sincerely

Tracy Hannon
Her Majesty's Inspector

Information about the inspection

I met with you to discuss your evaluation of the school. I spoke with four representatives from the governing body and held a telephone conversation with your local authority adviser. We visited lessons together and looked at the work in pupils' books. Additionally, I looked at books, action plans and information about pupils' attainment and progress with the English and mathematics leaders. I spoke with pupils from Years 1 to 6 to discuss their work and gather their views of the school. I also took into account the survey results from Parent View, the online Ofsted questionnaire for parents. I checked the effectiveness of your safeguarding and recruitment arrangements.