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Michael Rolls  
Executive Headteacher  
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Dear Mr Rolls

### **Short inspection of Shute Community Primary School**

Following my visit to the school on 27 September 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 January 2012.

#### **This school continues to be good.**

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

You have very recently taken up your post as executive headteacher of the Axe Beacon Federation, of which Shute Community Primary School is a part. The school has experienced a period of change in its leadership over the last twelve months. Your arrival in September 2016 has brought a renewed focus on improving outcomes for pupils. In this you are building on the work already started by the head of teaching and learning, who has day-to-day responsibility for running the school. She has been in post since April 2016. Together, you work well as a team with other staff and there have been clear improvements at the school over recent months, for example in levels of attendance.

In this drive to improve standards you are supported by the federation governing body, which also has new leadership in the person of the current acting chair of governors. Governors have a clear understanding of both the needs of the school and how the school fits into the work of the federation as a whole. They share and support the priorities that you have identified as the areas the school needs to work on in order to improve the quality of education even further. These include a continued focus on the improvement of pupils' writing and increasing the level of challenge for the most able, especially in mathematics.

Parents are very pleased with the quality of education and care that their children receive during their time at the school. In the online survey, Parent View, the vast majority of parents who responded said they would recommend the school to another prospective parent. In particular, parents spoke highly of the teachers and how 'nothing is too much trouble' for them and how they clearly 'all love what they do and love being there'. This is reflected in the results of the staff survey which is uniformly positive about working at the school. Parents of pupils who had recently transferred to Shute Community Primary School from other schools spoke about the warm reception their children had received and how smooth and well-organised the transition had been. Overall, therefore, it is clear that the school is the centre of a learning community in which staff and parents work well together to improve the educational outcomes for pupils.

### **Safeguarding is effective.**

Pupils are safe in the school and parents agree that their children are happy and well looked after. The fact that Shute Community Primary School is a relatively small school means that all the staff know all the children very well. This, in turn, means that they are very well placed to spot as early as possible if a child is troubled or their behaviour changes and whether this might indicate a deeper concern. Parents are very aware of this and talk of the 'family' atmosphere and how 'caring' the staff are. This is backed up with effective safeguarding practice based on the latest guidelines from the Secretary of State, contained in 'Keeping children safe in education' (September 2016).

Nevertheless, on arrival in your new post, you undertook a safeguarding audit and are going to be doing some work with the local authority to ensure that policies and procedures are absolutely watertight. There were some minor clerical omissions in the single central record of pre-employment checks on staff but on the whole leaders have ensured that safeguarding arrangements are fit for purpose and records are detailed.

### **Inspection findings**

- Despite the changes and uncertainties in leadership over the last 12 months, academic outcomes for pupils have remained strong. You and the new head of teaching and learning have a very clear focus on improving pupils' academic achievement across all key stages, including the early years. You have a clear insight into the areas that the school's pupils perform well in and those which need to improve.
- Historically, pupils have tended to perform better in reading and mathematics than in writing and this pattern was repeated in the recent 2016 national curriculum assessments at both key stage 1 and key stage 2. Assessment of pupils' work in books, however, across a range of abilities including the most able, shows that pupils are still making good progress in their writing skills. In particular, pupils' written work in Years 5 and 6 shows that they have mastered aspects of writing such as complex sentence structure, writing for a purpose and using punctuation

to enhance meaning and convey emotion.

- The progress that children make in the early years is broadly in line with that achieved by pupils nationally. Children have access to a wide range of activities in the early years and there is particular emphasis on outdoor learning, with 'welly walks' proving particularly popular with both children and parents. Target setting for children is effective in the early years, with good use being made of short-term targets which change frequently, often on a daily basis, as a result of effective ongoing assessment. Children in the early years can talk clearly about their learning and how they are developing key learning behaviours such as perseverance, or as they put it 'not giving up'.
- Pupils of all abilities, bearing in mind their starting points, read well. They demonstrate that they know how to use phonics to help them to read difficult or unfamiliar words. Reading is a prominent part of the life of the school and it has a well-appointed library to help it promote this culture of reading. Pupils' reading records show that the school monitors their reading closely and identifies those pupils who need greater encouragement to read, particularly at home. This is especially helpful for those who need to catch up in their reading.
- There are relatively few disadvantaged pupils in the school and this makes analysing their progress as a group difficult. Nevertheless, school leaders have a very clear insight into the needs of each individual pupil eligible for the pupil premium and any barriers to achievement they might face. Leaders understand how using the pupil premium imaginatively, for example by providing singing lessons, can pay dividends in terms of both pupils' self-confidence and academic outcomes. Nonetheless, the level of analysis of the impact of the use of government funding in the pupil premium strategy needs to improve.
- Pupils who have special educational needs and/or disabilities make good progress. The special educational needs coordinator leads this aspect of the school's work well and she has a very detailed knowledge of the needs of every individual pupil. As a consequence of this, pupils who have special educational needs and/or disabilities are able to access the curriculum and achieve well academically, whatever their starting points or particular needs.
- The most able pupils, including the most able disadvantaged pupils, make reasonable progress in the school but leaders are aware that there is scope for these pupils to achieve at even higher levels, especially in mathematics. The results of the 2016 national curriculum assessment in mathematics at key stage 1, for example, saw every pupil achieving the expected standard but relatively few achieving a high score. School leaders are rightly focusing on this as an area for improvement.
- Attendance at the school is improving and has been doing so particularly since the arrival of the head of teaching and learning in April 2016. Attendance for the last academic year was only just below the national average, having improved from being in the bottom 10% of primary schools in the previous year. This improvement has continued in the first weeks of this academic year. This is a testament to the successful work

that the school's staff do with families but, as you are aware, there is still room for further improvement here.

### **Next steps for the school**

Leaders and those responsible for governance should ensure that:

- outcomes in writing improve so that they are more consistently at the level of those for reading and mathematics across all key stages
- teaching provides greater challenge for the most able, especially in mathematics, so that an increasing proportion of pupils attain at a high standard.

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

Stephen Lee  
**Her Majesty's Inspector**

### **Information about the inspection**

During the inspection I held a number of meetings with you and the head of teaching and learning, beginning with a discussion of your evaluation of the school. I also met with the special educational needs coordinator. I observed pupils' learning in lessons and took the opportunity to examine the work in their books. I met with a number of governors, including the acting chair of the federation governing body, and also held a separate meeting with the nominated safeguarding governor. Both before and during the inspection, I examined a range of the school's documents and records of the progress made by pupils. I listened to pupils in Year 3 and Year 4 reading and also heard pupils in Year 5 and Year 6 reading aloud during a lesson. I spoke to parents at the start of the day and also took into account the 19 responses to the online survey of parental opinion, Parent View. I also examined the 11 responses to the staff survey and the one response to the pupil survey.

In particular, the inspection focused on the following key lines of enquiry:

- How successfully are school leaders ensuring pupils are making academic progress, especially those who are disadvantaged and those who have special educational needs and/or disabilities?
- How effectively have school leaders acted to improve the attendance of pupils?

- How effectively are school leaders using the pupil premium to improve the outcomes for disadvantaged pupils?
- How effective is safeguarding?