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Mrs Lisa Hinkley
Headteacher
Whitminster Endowed Church of England Primary School
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Dear Mrs Hinkley

Short inspection of Whitminster Endowed Church of England Primary School

Following my visit to the school on 22 November 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 inspected in June 2012 and judged to be good.

This school continues to be good.

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

You continue to lead and manage the school effectively. The strong sense of teamwork, clear purpose and determination of teachers and governors to make sure that every pupil achieves to their very best is a key feature of the school's sustained success. This is demonstrated well by the action that was taken to tackle a dip in standards, particularly in mathematics, following the last inspection. You and your teachers recognise that the high-quality training they received on teaching pupils how to tackle problems has resulted in improved mathematical outcomes in the most recent national tests at the end of both Year 2 and Year 6.

Given the mixed age groups and wide ability span within each class, you and your teachers ensure that the needs of individual pupils are carefully met. Meticulous planning over time, which focuses on specific group tasks, enables teachers to give dedicated time to the different abilities and age groups, including those who are vulnerable and those who have special educational needs and/or disabilities.

Teachers' strong commitment to professional development, which was also noted at the last inspection, has more recently supported them in improving pupils' writing skills. Teachers are proud that the initiatives introduced have improved the depth of writing that pupils produce. You and your leadership team have rightly identified that the next step is to combine pupils' improved writing skills with making better use of punctuation and accuracy in spelling.

You and your teaching staff have worked hard to become familiarised with the changes to the national curriculum and the new testing arrangements. This is reflected in the very positive outcomes from the most recent national tests. You carefully record the attainment of each pupil, and are knowledgeable about their individual learning journeys through the school. However, you and your team are less confident in demonstrating overall trends and patterns in pupils' attainment and progress. This is particularly so for specific groups, and in a way that can be quickly used to identify any emerging strengths or areas that need to be developed further.

Safeguarding is effective.

You, your teaching staff and governors have ensured that all safeguarding arrangements are fit for purpose and records are detailed. All staff and governors keep up to date with safeguarding training, for example in safer recruitment and preventing radicalisation and extremism. Suitable policies and procedures are in place and implemented by all staff. You have created a culture of vigilance with regard to safeguarding pupils.

Staff know the children and families very well and keep a close eye on every pupil, especially those whose circumstances are vulnerable. Pupils' personal development, behaviour and welfare, including their attendance, are monitored rigorously. Appropriate action is taken to address any issues, including working with external agencies when necessary.

Pupils report that they feel very safe in school, and parents who responded to the online Parent View questionnaire agree. Pupils know how to keep safe when using the internet and have a secure understanding of the misuse of social media. They explain that there is no bullying in school and are confident that if it did happen, staff would deal with it swiftly. Pupils are respectful of each other's cultures and are very proud of the way in which their school welcomes everyone.

Inspection findings

- At the heart of this good school is the sense of 'family', of which staff, parents, pupils and governors feel very much a part. Serving an extremely diverse community, the school's fully inclusive nature ensures that all groups of pupils, including those who are disadvantaged or vulnerable, are treated with respect. Staff, parents and pupils describe the school as being 'one big family'.

- At the time of the last inspection, the school's provision for spiritual, moral, social and cultural development was highlighted as a strength, and this remains central to its ethos. Walking to the war memorial to remember those who died during war and wearing spots to fund-raise for BBC Children in Need are just two of the many events where pupils take time to reflect. One parent summed up the views of many others by explaining that, 'they are not only educating my children well with academic skills but they also nurture them to become sociable, empathetic and aware of the wider community'.
- Having successfully rectified the dip in attainment in mathematics, you and your teachers have been concentrating on helping pupils to write more creatively and in greater depth. Pupils are encouraged to talk about their writing before they start putting pen to paper and this has improved the quality of writing. You and your teachers are now working on improving pupils' spelling and ensuring that they punctuate their work accurately.
- Although in the past there have been some differences in the attainment between boys and girls at the end of their Reception Year, all children, regardless of their ability or gender, make good progress. Activities and topics are planned skilfully to meet their needs. You are making competent use of the additional sport funding to develop the physical skills of some of your youngest Reception children.
- The teaching of phonics is secure and enables pupils to recognise and read words with growing confidence. The most able readers, including those who are disadvantaged or vulnerable, read with fluency and talk confidently about their favourite authors. Those who find difficulty in learning to read are given appropriate support to help them in developing key sound and word recognition.
- The regular and extended absences, which are well above average, relate to Traveller and showman families who are registered at your school. You and your staff maintain close contact with the families during the periods they are travelling or working away from the area and support them extremely well.
- Traveller and showman families welcome the long-distance learning packs that are provided for the children during their absence from school. They also appreciate the way in which the school keeps in touch with them and contacts other schools they temporarily attend. On their return, these families are warmly welcomed back by staff and pupils, quickly becoming part of school life again. This close relationship with the Traveller and showman communities, coupled with the seamless transition back into school life, has justifiably earned the school a very strong regard among these communities.
- You and your staff have a thorough knowledge of all your pupils and are very sensitive to their differing needs. One parent explained that pupils are given 'strong educational, pastoral and emotional support'.
- Teachers are effective in encouraging the pupils to think for themselves. Consequently, pupils are not afraid to try new challenges and find

different ways of working. They display very positive attitudes to their learning and work well with each other to investigate and solve work problems.

- Pupils are really happy at this school and consider that they are getting 'the best educational journey ever'. Their behaviour is impeccable and the care and concern they show for each other are impressive. They are very proud of their buddy system, which involves older pupils pairing up with younger ones. Those pupils who join the school mid-way through their primary education speak very highly of the way in which they are welcomed into the community. They explain that this makes them feel 'at home' and helps them to gain confidence in their new surroundings.
- The vast majority of parents who responded to the online questionnaire were overwhelmingly positive about the school. One parent summed up the views of most by explaining that: 'The school is fantastically led by a superb headteacher. I cannot speak highly enough of the teaching team. You can always feel the positive energy from staff and pupils alike. A gem of a school.'

Next steps for the school

Leaders and those responsible for governance should ensure that:

- the information collected on pupils' attainment is produced in a format that is easily accessible for staff and governors to accurately evaluate progress and identify trends for further improvement
- teachers include more regular opportunities for the pupils to develop further their spelling and punctuation skills when extending pupils' writing skills.

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

Yours sincerely

Lorna Brackstone
Her Majesty's Inspector

Information about the inspection

I met with you and we discussed improvements since the last inspection, and pupils' progress in the most recent national tests. We also looked at the systems you use to track attainment over time. I held discussions with your senior and middle leaders, four governors, two parents and a representative from the local authority. We visited all the classes together and looked at some

of the pupils' work in their books. Four pupils read to me and I met with six older pupils to talk about school life. I looked at the 33 results from Parent View and considered the comments that had been placed on the website by some parents.

The key lines of enquiry tested on the short inspection day were:

- Have leaders ensured that this school has remained consistently good since the previous inspection report?
- Does provision in the mixed Reception and Year 1 class fully meet the needs of the youngest children, especially the boys?
- Are teachers supporting all groups of pupils to progress as well as they can, especially those who are disadvantaged, vulnerable or have special educational needs and/or disabilities?
- Does the school keep its pupils safe, especially given the high rates of absence and persistent absence for some groups of pupils?