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Mrs Katherine Page-Howie
Headteacher
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Dear Mrs Page-Howie

Short inspection of Shiplake Church of England School

Following my visit to the school on 6 December 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 September 2011.

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 made considerable improvements to advance leadership and teaching skills since the last inspection.

The school's ethos and values of 'mutual respect, good behaviour and high academic standards within a Christian and moral culture' are borne out in all aspects of your work. Consequently, pupils are highly motivated, keen to learn and achieve well.

You are a determined and effective leader with stoic drive and ambition for continuous improvement. You, your leadership team and governors set the highest expectations. Providing the best for your pupils is central to any improvement strategy you make. You are precise in your understanding of current school performance and acutely aware of the areas that require further work. Consequently, you are working on the right aspects of improvement and governors are holding you firmly to account.

Rightly, you are proud of the high standards that the school achieves. However, you are not complacent and constantly seek out ways to strengthen teaching, learning and pupils' outcomes. For example, you accurately identify that more needs to be done to challenge middle- and high-attaining pupils so that a greater proportion meet the highest standards in writing.

Parents are overwhelmingly supportive of the school. Typical comments highlight high academic standards and the positive learning culture within the school which helps their children grow into well-rounded young people and become well prepared for secondary school.

At the previous inspection you were asked to accelerate pupils' progress in mathematics. Strong leadership has resulted in considerable improvement. Pupils' achievement is now consistently high by the end of key stage 2. Teaching of mathematics is good. Current pupils have plenty of opportunity to use and apply their mathematical understanding to a wide variety of contexts. Consequently, current pupils, including the most able, are making good and often rapid progress in mathematics.

You were also asked to accelerate pupils' progress in writing. Improvement is evident since the last inspection through the wider opportunities to write across the curriculum and the high academic standards that pupils achieve. By the time pupils leave the school, the proportion achieving the expected standard is well above the national average. However, the proportion of pupils exceeding the national standard is lower than you aspire to. At key stage 1, the most able pupils do well in writing but some middle-attaining pupils narrowly miss the expected standards. You and your leadership team are tracking pupils' progress rigorously so that teachers make sure that work is well matched to current pupils' needs and that their progress accelerates quickly this year.

Improving wider leadership across the school was another development area at the previous inspection. You have been effective in increasing leadership roles across the school. As a result, teachers are better held to account for achieving consistently high standards. The introduction of key stage leaders is enabling greater rigour in the way that pupils' progress and checks on teaching are carried out. Consequently, middle leaders have an accurate understanding of strengths and weaknesses in their subjects and have a strong impact across the school. As a result of training, your subject leaders also focus on raising pupils' achievement and now undertake key tasks to analyse the impact of teaching on learning. For example, the science leader conducts checks through book scrutiny and visiting lessons and in the accurate coverage of all aspects of the science programme of study.

Safeguarding is effective.

There is a strong culture of keeping pupils safe from harm at this school. Timely referrals and active engagement with multi-agency support is documented and followed up precisely by staff with specific responsibilities for safeguarding. Inspection evidence confirms that staff are diligent in the attention they give to pupils who are at risk of harm and that school systems are meticulously followed. All staff spoken to on inspection know exactly what to do if they have concerns. Staff have completed all appropriate training, including a recent update to 'Keeping children safe in education', September 2016 and training in the 'Prevent' duty. The systems used to check employees' suitability are rigorous; however, some record-keeping in this regard is currently being strengthened even further. Governors' checks to the single central record and impact of staff training are regular. Annual

safeguarding audits are returned to the local authority and any actions followed up quickly. All statutory duties are met.

Pupils spoken to on inspection understood the potential risks of going online and using mobile phones. They were quick to point out their classwork on e-safety in the IT suite and said that they knew what to do if they have concerns. Pupils talked keenly about the school's values of friendship, equality and truthfulness and were keen to explain their own responsibility to be vigilant and keep safe within and beyond school. Pupils enjoy lunchtime and say that they are well supervised by staff. Older pupils look out for younger ones and enjoy this additional responsibility. The vast majority of pupils and parents who responded to online surveys agree or strongly agree that pupils are safe.

Inspection findings

- Governors are highly strategic. They hold the school to account successfully. There is a new chair of governors in place who is providing clear oversight of governors' roles, skill-set and effectiveness. Governors ask challenging questions in meetings and visit the school regularly to review the impact of school improvement initiatives. Governors accurately identify areas that need to be sharpened and do not shy away from having challenging conversations with leaders, to enable the school to improve even further.
- Local authority external support is 'light touch' because internal leadership capacity in the school is strong. However, governors are not complacent and have commissioned additional support from the diocesan advisor to quality assure the school's work and support with performance management of the headteacher.
- Leaders' checks on teaching and learning are regular. Leaders' feedback to teachers is thorough. Staff value the feedback they receive. They say that the school is well led and managed. Leaders also provide a comprehensive package of support for teachers when they are new to the school or profession. Regular coaching and additional planning support ensure that teachers soon do things the 'Shiplake way' and consequently pupils make good progress, with a number of pupils exceeding the progress that is expected.
- You and your staff have spent time perfecting the way you assess pupils' progress. This new system is developing well. In most classes, teachers make good use of assessment so that each pupil works at the right level. This is particularly effective in Years 5 and 6, where pupils make very strong progress. However, you rightly acknowledge that the progress of most-able pupils needs to be tracked more closely so that teachers know exactly where to increase levels of challenge, and these pupils achieve their potential across the curriculum.
- Most teaching builds on what pupils already know, can do and understand. As a result, middle-attaining pupils are doing well at this school. However, a greater proportion of these pupils could be targeted for meeting higher standards in writing. This is because in some classes they do not always get challenging work quickly enough.
- The few disadvantaged pupils in the school receive additional targeted support. As a result, the vast majority of these pupils are making rapid progress in reading

and the differences between their achievement and that of other pupils nationally is diminishing steadily. Leaders, including governors, track the funding and its impact effectively.

- Pupils who have special educational needs and/or disabilities are well supported in the school. This is because leaders have wide-ranging systems for identifying pupils' specific needs and following up pupils' provision in lessons. As a result, most pupils are making good progress from their different starting points.
- The most able pupils respond particularly well to the challenging tasks set for them in mathematics. Teaching ensures that pupils have plenty of opportunities to articulate their understanding well, and this helps them to deepen their mathematical understanding even further. Pupils are able to reason and apply their mathematical understanding. However, inspection evidence confirms that teachers need to expect more of pupils and provide more challenging work in writing. You have identified that opportunities to edit and improve their writing are too limited and a first draft that meets the standards expected nationally is too readily accepted, so some pupils do not reach their potential.
- The reception class is a vibrant and exciting place to learn. Adults undertake regular assessments of children at work, and inspection evidence confirms that children's progress is good overall. Developing children's literacy skills is a high priority within the indoor and outdoor learning spaces. For example, the inspector saw children practising letter formation with big chalks outside.
- In key stage 1, your organisation of the teaching of phonics helps teachers to meet pupils' individual needs well. Consequently, the most able pupils experience challenging work on spelling strategies such as suffixes. Pupils who did not meet expected standards at the end of early years are making steady progress this term. However, greater application of phonics skills in pupils' early writing remains a high priority, particularly for boys, so that these pupils catch up rapidly and reach the standards in writing that are expected of them.
- Pupils read widely and demonstrate clear understanding of what they read at key stage 2. Outcomes in workbooks confirm that pupils are expected to use their reading skills across a range of subjects and 'read between the lines' to understand key themes in the texts they read. Pupils at key stage 1 apply phonics strategies to reading well.
- Historical published attendance data, for the specific groups such as those who have special educational needs and/or disabilities and pupils who receive free school meals, does not tell the full picture of their attendance. Inspection evidence confirms that there are specific reasons for this and any variability is fully accounted for. The system to monitor groups of pupils' attendance is robust and effective. Overall, attendance is well above national averages.
- Pupils show good learning attitudes and behaviours and consistently show high levels of concentration and resilience. Pupils look out for one another during playtime and particularly enjoy the opportunities to play with all age groups within the school family. Most pupils who took part in the survey agreed that behaviour was good and that any issues were dealt with promptly.

Next steps for the school

Leaders and those responsible for governance should ensure that:

- pupils make consistently high rates of progress in writing and that the proportion of them exceeding the writing standards expected for their age increases even further
- activities planned provide sufficient challenge and increased opportunity to edit and improve pupils' writing
- disadvantaged pupils make as much progress in their writing as they do in reading, so that their progress is consistently good across the curriculum.

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

Yours sincerely

Julie Carrington
Her Majesty's Inspector

Information about the inspection

During the inspection, I observed learning in classrooms with the headteacher and scrutinised workbooks across a wide range of subjects. I examined a wide range of documentation, including the school's own self-evaluation, past and current development plans, safeguarding and child protection records as well as the school's assessment information.

Meetings were held with the headteacher and deputy headteacher. I met with the designated leader for safeguarding. I met with one of the key stage leaders, who is also the science leader. I also met with a group of governors and reviewed minutes of their meetings and visit records to the school.

I had telephone conversations with a representative of the local authority and diocese of Oxford.

I also took into account the views of 90 parents who responded to Parent View, and of the 13 staff and 55 pupils who expressed their views through Ofsted's online questionnaires. I met with a group of pupils from different year groups to listen to their experience of school. I observed playtime. I also heard pupils read.

This short inspection focused on:

- the school's work to ensure that the teaching and learning in mathematics and writing is consistently good across the school, including in the early years
- the impact of leaders' actions to improve the attainment and progress of the most able pupils across the school
- pupils' attendance and safety
- the impact of middle leadership roles across the school.