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Mrs Nikki Bond  
Headteacher  
St Marychurch Church of England Primary and Nursery School  
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Dear Mrs Bond

### **Short inspection of St Marychurch Church of England Primary and Nursery School**

Following my visit to the school on 26 January 2017, 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 December 2010.

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

The leadership team has maintained the good quality of education in the school since the last inspection. Your Christian values of 'love, peace, joy and kindness' are reflected in all aspects of school life. You, your staff and governors know that pupils cannot make progress in their learning if they are unhappy. The investment in high-quality pastoral care and support is a successful feature of your school. It has strongly supported the improving attendance rate, which was identified at the time of the last inspection as an area that needed tackling. It also ensures that those pupils who find relationships challenging are helped to manage their feelings. This enables them to cope better with their learning. In particular, this strong pastoral aspect of your provision has supported disadvantaged pupils well. As a result, in the most recent Year 6 national test results they made similar progress to their peers nationally. Parents recognise that 'the school is good at supporting vulnerable and challenging children, while providing a varied and engaging curriculum to the whole school'. They know that teachers are 'always striving to care for any child as an individual... it's such a happy environment'.

At the time of the last inspection, the school was also asked to improve the quality of feedback which was provided by the teachers. During my visit, I noted that all teachers follow the agreed marking policy and pupils reflect carefully on the comments that are made to improve their work. The way in which you and your teachers regularly meet together as a team to review the progress of every pupil in

the school is a significant factor in their improving progress and rising standards. It has also helped to develop the teachers' confidence and increase their expectations. This is because they share with each other what works well for them in class.

### **Safeguarding is effective.**

The leadership team has ensured that all safeguarding arrangements are fit for purpose and records are detailed and of high quality. Your wider involvement in improving the effectiveness of safeguarding children in the Torbay area enhances the work of your own school to keep its pupils safe. Rigorous recruitment and vetting procedures and detailed checks on any visitors to the school site ensure that no pupil is put at risk. The well-trained staff and governors are very alert to signs of child sexual exploitation and any aspects of radicalism and extremism. The school's very purposeful working partnerships with specialist agencies and organisations ensure that wider family issues are supported through a strong team approach.

Pupils report that they feel very safe in school. This is because every individual formally identifies five 'trusted adults' that they can turn to if they have a problem or concern. The visual reminders about these 'trusted adults', which are in the shape of a hand, enable pupils to feel extremely secure and cared for. They are very clear about keeping safe when using the internet and explain the dangers of online bullying. Pupils appear less aware of the misuse of mobile telephones. The vast majority of parents who responded to Parent View, the online inspection questionnaire, agreed that their children feel safe in school and are well looked after.

### **Inspection findings**

- To ascertain that the school remained good, I explored the progress that your pupils were making in mathematics. Although the 2016 national test outcomes in Years 2 and 6 for mathematics were disappointing, you and your staff swiftly analysed where pupils had gaps in their knowledge and skills. You then carefully identified ways in which they could make better progress. By reorganising the split-age key stage 2 classes into discrete year groups for teaching mathematics, your teachers find that they can now focus effectively on the skills to be taught in each year group and improve their depth of knowledge. You and your staff also express a greater confidence in the requirements of the new curriculum and the higher expectations of the recently introduced assessment arrangements. Teachers focus more on helping pupils to think and work out problems for themselves. Pupils explain the way they solve problems and confidentially share their answers with their teachers and classmates. This is helping them to have a greater belief and awareness of what they are capable of. Consequently, current pupils in key stage 2 have accelerated their mathematical progress and are well on track to meet expected standards, with the most able, including those who are disadvantaged, exceeding them.
- Although you are still teaching mathematics in the split-age groups in Years 1 and 2, the key stage 1 team staff are making much more use of resources and visual prompts to support the pupils in their learning. Current pupils are on track

to meet age-related expectations, with the most able working at a greater depth of learning.

- My second line of enquiry was about overall achievement in key stage 1. In the 2016 national tests, Year 2 pupils showed that their progress from Reception was not as strong as it should have been. You and your governors are fully aware that this was as a result of previous inconsistencies in teaching, and staff turbulence during their time in key stage 1. Careful recruitment of new teachers, who have high expectations and a strong understanding of the new curriculum, has ensured that current pupils in Years 1 and 2 are making better progress. This is because their teachers work well together as a team, carefully planning together and tailoring activities to meet the needs of the pupils.
- I noted that the past inconsistencies in the teaching at key stage 1 have had a negative impact on the current Year 3 pupils' reading skills. Some pupils choose to skip over unknown words rather than work them out and not all have a clear understanding of the difference between fact and fiction books. They also lack the knowledge and confidence to talk about what they are actually reading.
- You have identified that, although children make strong progress in developing their speaking and listening, and reading and counting skills during their time in the Nursery and Reception classes, a significant proportion lack confidence when they move into Year 1. This is because many start school with underdeveloped personal, social and emotional skills and find change difficult to manage. You and your staff are fully aware that you need to improve the transition from Reception to Year 1 to ensure that pupils do not slow down their pace of learning.
- My final line of enquiry was about attendance. The most recent published information highlights that during the last academic year a significant proportion of those pupils who were entitled to free school meals, or who were supported with an education, health and care plan or a statement of special educational needs, did not attend school regularly enough. Your very detailed records of individual attendance patterns show that those pupils who were persistently absent from school last year experienced complex medical issues requiring specialist intervention and regular hospital visits. They were well supported through close liaison between your teachers, their parents and the external agencies. The development of a computer application, which pupils and parents use to access the work being taught in school, has supported well those pupils who have ongoing health problems.

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

Leaders and those responsible for governance should ensure that:

- current Year 3 pupils are taught to use their phonics knowledge to work out words they do not know, and develop the confidence to talk about and understand what they are reading
- transition arrangements between Reception and Year 1 are refined to support those pupils who lack confidence when they make this move.

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

Lorna Brackstone  
**Her Majesty's Inspector**

### **Information about the inspection**

I met with you to talk about the improvements which had been made since the last inspection. I looked at your self-evaluation of the effectiveness of the school, your safeguarding records and explored your recruitment and vetting procedures. I also held discussions with five governors, including the chair of governors, and five senior and middle leaders. We visited some mathematics lessons together and I informally spoke to a number of pupils about their learning. We also briefly visited the Reception and Nursery classes. I heard two Year 3 pupils read. I also had a discussion with eight pupils from Years 2 to 6. I looked at the 81 survey results from Parent View and considered the comments that had been submitted.