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10 March 2017

Mrs Jane Rosser
Headteacher
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Dear Mrs Rosser

Short inspection of High Ham Church of England Primary School

Following my visit to the school on 21 February 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 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.

The school provides a welcoming community atmosphere where very supportive relationships enable pupils to thrive. The qualities outlined in the school's mission statement, 'Together we care, share and learn', flourish in all classes. One parent wrote reflecting the views of most: 'I have been more than happy with the education and opportunities that High Ham has offered my children. They have both been extremely happy, challenged and supported.'

You, senior leaders and governors are a capable leadership team. Your accurate and detailed evaluations of the school's strengths and weaknesses have enabled you to sustain the strengths and improve those areas that needed some improvement or development. As a result, pupils achieve well and attain above-average standards by the time they leave the school.

At the previous inspection you were asked to make sure that existing strengths in teaching were fully shared with new teachers so they can contribute productively to the deepening of pupils' learning. Your work in this respect is effective.

The sharing of expertise has been accompanied by a carefully planned programme of staff training. You have established a clearly understood and effective system for assessing pupils' progress. This has ensured that teachers set work that challenges

pupils at the right level and, when feeding back to pupils, make clear what must be done to improve the work. In turn, this boosts pupils' confidence and understanding and enhances their ability to help each other and to learn for themselves. As a result, pupils across the range of ability, including disadvantaged pupils and the most able, make good progress.

Together, we examined pupils' writing in their books and on display around the school. Interesting topics successfully stimulate pupils and help them to deepen their understanding and produce high-quality writing. Pupils are motivated to write and are fully involved in their learning. Teaching in Years 5 and 6 places a strong focus on developing pupils' literacy and numeracy skills across other subjects. However, we agreed that the application of literacy and numeracy skills across a range of subjects is not yet consistent in other classes.

We identified that children, boys and girls alike, continue to make a successful start to school life and make strong progress in the early years. However, occasional inconsistencies in the teaching of phonic understanding in Year 1 slow some pupils' progress in learning to read. You are fully aware of this and know how to improve it.

Safeguarding is effective.

There is a strong culture of safeguarding that pervades all aspects of school life. All those who work in the school welcome the emphasis placed on frequent training, teamwork and sustained vigilance in keeping pupils safe.

You, the designated safeguarding leaders and governors ensure that the school's policies and procedures fully meet statutory requirements and guidance. Governors undertake regular checks on safeguarding. I found that you make good use of outside specialist support to make sure that routine checks of health and safety equipment are kept fully up to date. I also noted the diligent way that leaders undertake checks of staff records and behaviour and accident logs to make sure that potential risks are assessed and reduced.

Parents and pupils who spoke to me all agreed that children feel very safe at school. One pupil, typically, commented that: 'Children and staff care about each other.' When questioned, pupils also clearly indicated that they know who to contact and what to do if they have any concerns.

Inspection findings

- We agreed that the first line of enquiry was to examine how you ensure that boys in the early years achieve as well as girls, particularly in developing their phonic understanding and early reading skills. An above average and increasing proportion of children, boys as well as girls, achieve a good level of development by the time they enter Year 1, including their phonic understanding and early reading skills.
- Good transition arrangements from pre-school provision ensure that staff identify

children's individual needs well. Teaching effectively stimulates boys' interest in learning through interesting stories, topics and activities. As a result, children in the early years make good progress.

- Strong and effective teaching of phonics in the early years enables children to learn and accurately pronounce the sounds that letters make. Helped by parents, who are encouraged to read with their children at home, this ensures that boys and girls make equally strong progress in learning to read.
- We examined how effectively leaders and teachers in key stage 1 build on the good start that children make in Reception. In particular, why the proportion of boys reaching expected standards in the Year 1 phonics screening checks in recent years has been below the national average.
- You have been successful in enthusing boys in their learning and this is steadily raising standards in reading. However, some inconsistencies in the teaching of phonics at key stage 1 remain. As a result, some boys do not read with accuracy and fluency when tackling new words.
- We examined the degree to which your increased emphasis on developing pupils' spelling, punctuation and grammar skills is enriching their writing skills. There is clear evidence that it is.
- Pupils respond well to their teachers' feedback. For example, pupils take more care when using punctuation and spelling new words. Pupils are increasingly checking their own and each other's work and, by so doing, are improving their spelling and using punctuation more accurately.
- We also examined the extent to which pupils' writing and mathematical skills are further developed across the curriculum. Pupils' ability to write fluently and confidently, with well-developed handwriting skills, is promoting their strong progress through the school.
- Older pupils in Years 5 and 6 are frequently able to use, apply and extend their writing and mathematical skills well across other subjects. However, pupils in Years 1 to 4 do not have enough opportunities to use and extend their literacy and numeracy skills across other subjects and this limits their progress.
- Pupils in every class enjoy stimulating learning experiences across the curriculum and have good opportunities to write about topics in religious education.

Next steps for the school

Leaders and those responsible for governance should ensure that:

- there is a more consistent approach to the teaching of phonics at key stage 1
- in Years 1 to 4, teaching deepens pupils' writing and mathematical skills by providing more opportunities for them to develop these skills across a wide range of subjects.

I am copying this letter to the chair of the governing body, the director of education for the Diocese of Bath and Wells, the regional schools commissioner and the

director of children's services for Somerset. This letter will be published on the Ofsted website.

Yours sincerely

Alexander Baxter
Ofsted Inspector

Information about the inspection

During the inspection, I held meetings with you and with the deputy headteacher and other staff with leadership responsibilities. I also met with members of the governing body and held a telephone conversation with a representative of the local authority. I visited classrooms with you and together we scrutinised samples of pupils' work in their books. I listened to readers to evaluate their interest in reading and the skills they showed. I talked with individual pupils and support staff during the morning and lunch breaks. In addition, I met several parents before the school day. I examined a range of documents relating to safeguarding, pupils' attendance, progress and school self-evaluation and development. I took account of 123 responses to the Ofsted online Parent View survey, 22 responses to the staff questionnaire and 41 responses to the pupil questionnaire.