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Mrs Tina Rodwell-Lynn  
Head of School  
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Dear Mrs Rodwell-Lynn

### **Short inspection of Blackawton Primary School**

Following my visit to the school on 7 March 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 your predecessor school was judged to be good in June 2010.

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

The leadership team has maintained the good quality of education in the school since the last inspection. There have been significant changes in the governance of this school over time. However, throughout these changes you continued to ensure a good quality of teaching and learning in the school. Progress for pupils in the 2016 Year 6 tests put the school in the top 10% of all schools nationally and in the top 5% for reading.

You have appointed and nurtured three new members of staff to your five-class school in this academic year. Staff speak of your infectious passion for improvement. As one parent put it, 'The tenacity of the head permeates the school.' You work well with the new executive principal of the Education South West Trust to share your expectations and vision for the school with great clarity. As a result, you have developed a new team that shares your drive and high expectations. After a period of considerable change, school improvement is firmly back on track.

The school is a welcoming school that fosters a love of learning. The 'Blackawton Way' blueprint for excellence helps every adult and pupil associated with the school to understand the part they play in the school's work. Pupils' behaviour in and around the school is a delight. Pupils told me that 'We are encouraged every day to do our best and to work out of our comfort zone.' Outdoor learning is an integral feature of the school's work. Regardless of the weather, pupils and staff don appropriate clothing and immerse themselves in creative activities in the school's well-developed school grounds. Activities are thoughtfully planned to equip pupils to be resilient and to manage risks in a sensible way. You and the staff have ensured

that pupils respect themselves, each other, their work and school. Consequently, pupils are highly motivated and their confidence thrives. Parents are overwhelmingly positive about the school's work. One hundred per cent of those who responded to Parent View would recommend the school to other parents. Typically, parents describe how their children 'flourish'. They say that the school provides their children with 'a strong sense of self-accountability'.

### **Safeguarding is effective.**

Pupils are safe. Your staff have a good knowledge of pupils and their families. This means that staff are sensitive to changes in pupils' circumstances and alert to signs of harm. Designated leaders for safeguarding are assiduous in engaging with external agencies to ensure that pupils and their families receive the support they require. School documentation demonstrates that staff carry out rigorous risk assessments to ensure that the school environment is a safe place to be. Similarly, staff carefully plan to mitigate hazards for school trips and residential visits. This contributes to the strong culture of safeguarding at Blackawton. Parents who responded to the online questionnaire were unanimous in saying that they felt their children were safe and well cared for in school.

Recent procedures and policies instigated by the current trust leaders have considerably strengthened recruitment procedures and documentation. The school's arrangements for safeguarding staff training are strong. Staff confidently described the process of sharing concerns with the designated person. Governors have been rigorous in not authorising holiday absence in an attempt to improve pupil absence. However, although improving, attendance is still below the national average.

### **Inspection findings**

- My initial line of enquiry focused on how leaders were ensuring equalities within the school. In particular, I focused on boys' writing. In the early years and in key stage 1, outcomes show that fewer boys meet the expected standard or better in writing compared to the girls. By the end of Year 6, 2016 outcomes show a much more positive picture. Boys make good progress and achieve outcomes above the national average. You identified the weaker performance of boys in writing in some year groups and have acted swiftly to address this. Teachers' thoughtful planning to engage boys in writing has been successful. For example, I observed boys eagerly engaged in writing about Vikings. Current outcomes across the school suggest that more boys are now in line to achieve the expected standard in writing. However, in key stage 1, the progress of boys in writing is less rapid than elsewhere in the school. The boys lag behind the girls, who are on track to achieve the high standard in this key stage.
- My second trail focused on the effectiveness of teaching in key stage 1 to support the most able mathematicians. Outcomes over time indicate that fewer pupils achieve the high standards in mathematics at key stage 1 compared to pupils nationally. You have taken effective action to tackle this. You have implemented a thorough system to assess pupils' understanding. Teachers use this effectively to identify pupils' next steps. Teachers also ensure that mathematical reasoning

is an integral part of the curriculum. The strong practice in key stage 2 is now embedding in key stage 1. Predicted outcomes based on accurate assessments suggest that a greater proportion of pupils are on track to achieve a high standard this year. This represents good progress from pupils' different starting points.

- My next trail concentrated on the provision in the early years to support the most able children in making good progress. Outcomes in the early years reflect an improving picture and remain above the national average. Highly effective leadership has resulted in the development of a safe and stimulating early years environment. Effective teaching supports children from the age of two to develop their curiosity and skills. The teacher's highly tuned use of assessment to inform her planning helps the children to thrive and to make good progress across all areas of learning. Increasingly, children are achieving high standards by the end of the early years. Consequently, children are extremely well prepared for the next stage in their education.
- My final line of enquiry focused on the support for pupils who have special educational needs and/or disabilities. The new leader for this area took up her post in September 2016. She has worked swiftly to ascertain individual staff areas of expertise. Consequently, she has been able to provide a bespoke programme of training. Staff have welcomed this. Training has increased their knowledge and understanding of particular pupils' learning needs and supported them in using effective approaches to aid learning. The leader has left no stone unturned in helping pupils to overcome barriers to their learning. The engagement with external agencies and parents is high. Teachers empower pupils to build upon their strengths, as well as developing strategies pupils can apply to conquer obstacles to their learning. This determined drive by all concerned leads to good progress. As a result, the school's work lives up to its motto: 'opening doors to a world of possibilities'.

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

Leaders and those responsible for governance should ensure that:

- teaching, learning and assessment in key stage 1 support pupils, and particularly boys, in making the strong progress in writing that they make elsewhere in the school
- they strengthen the work to improve attendance so that rates of attendance grow in line with national averages.

I am copying this letter to the chair of the executive board, the regional schools commissioner and the director of children's services for Devon. This letter will be published on the Ofsted website.

Yours sincerely

Tracy Hannon  
**Her Majesty's Inspector**

## **Information about the inspection**

I met with you and the executive principal to agree the timetable and inspection activities for the day. I also worked extensively with you and your senior leaders across the day. I met with the early years foundation stage leader to evaluate the effectiveness of the provision for the most able children. I also met with the senior leader for pupils who have special educational needs and/or disabilities and the leader of science.

I scrutinised safeguarding records and discussed a wide range of matters related to safeguarding, including staff recruitment, fire drill logs and reporting procedures where the school has concerns about pupils' well-being. Together, we visited all classes. We scrutinised a range of books and talked at length with different pupils in line with our agreed key lines of enquiry. I also met with representatives of the governing body and board of directors, including the chief executive officer for the trust. I reviewed school documents, including the school's self-evaluation summary and school improvement plans.

I spoke with a group of pupils at lunchtime to gain their views of various aspects of the school's work. I also considered 66 pupil responses and 18 staff responses to the online questionnaires as well as the 56 responses made by parents to Parent View.