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Mrs Sally Fulford  
Headteacher  
Dulverton Junior School  
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Dulverton  
Somerset  
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Dear Mrs Fulford

### **Short inspection of Dulverton Junior School**

Following my visit to the school on 28 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 the school was judged to be good in July 2013.

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

Since your appointment as headteacher in April 2016, you have successfully steered the school through a period of major change. You have built on the strengths identified in the school at the last inspection and ensured that the good quality of education has been maintained. You have demonstrated strong leadership during the transition from a middle school to a junior school. At the same time as this re-organisation, you have overseen a major building project to extend the facilities and refurbish the science laboratory. You have not been afraid to challenge where you have judged that further improvements are needed, and so the quality of teaching and learning is improving.

Pupils have quickly settled in to the new school. Pupils appreciate that you give them opportunities to take on responsibility in the school. For example, the school council organised a charity fund-raising event recently. Staff know the pupils as individuals and provide them with support that is appropriate to their different needs. Pupils' overall progress in reading, writing and mathematics is in line with the national average. You have begun to develop greater links with parents. Consequently, there are now more opportunities for parents to come into school, see pupils' work and take part in activities with staff. The majority of parents would recommend this school to another parent.

You have successfully tackled the areas for improvement identified at the previous inspection. You have ensured that the curriculum is well planned and appropriate to the needs of pupils. You have paid particular attention to providing them with broad experiences, for example by linking with another school in an urban area. Teaching is stretching the most able pupils in many cases. Pupils are challenged to think deeply about their choice of words and the use of formal or informal styles in their writing. Pupils love to read. They are knowledgeable about different genres and keen to talk about their favourite authors. However, you recognise that developing the level of challenge in mathematics teaching is a priority for the future.

You are highly ambitious for the pupils. The new school is now established and well organised; however, you are aware of the need to raise standards further by developing the skills of all staff. For example, in 2016 the attainment of key stage 2 pupils in English spelling, punctuation and grammar was below average. You have taken steps to address this, but there is still scope for improvement.

### **Safeguarding is effective.**

You, along with the governors, have made sure that effective policies and procedures are in place to ensure that pupils are safe and well looked after. You make timely referrals to outside agencies when the need arises and keep detailed records safely and securely.

Pupils who spoke to me said they felt safe at school. They are well taught about safety when using the internet. They are also knowledgeable about minimising risks in the wider world, for example the importance of farm safety. Pupils are clear that bullying is not common and, on the occasions when it does happen, staff deal with it well.

You make keeping pupils safe and secure your first priority. Staff are well trained and kept informed by regular updates. You ensure that all staff are alert to any potential issues and that safeguarding pupils is seen as everyone's responsibility. Consequently, there is an open culture at the school and staff are continually vigilant.

### **Inspection findings**

- Senior leaders make rigorous checks on the quality of teaching and pupils' progress. As a result, governors have a good understanding of the strengths and weaknesses of the school. The chair of the governing body and all the governors have been appointed in the last two years. Together with senior leaders, they are raising the aspirations of the school community. Joint work with universities, for example, is being used well to make pupils aware of the wide range of options open to them in the future.

- To ascertain that the school remained good, the first key line of enquiry centred on mathematics teaching. In 2016, pupils' progress in mathematics, while broadly in line with the national average, was lower than pupils' progress in reading or writing. Senior leaders changed the curriculum plan and placed a greater emphasis on teaching problem solving. Because pupils are now given more opportunity to practise these skills, they are making better progress than previously. Pupils currently in Year 6 are on track to exceed the attainment of last year. However, pupils, particularly in Years 3 and 4, are not yet confident to explain their reasoning when they have answered a question or solved a problem.
- Another key line of enquiry concerned pupils' spelling, punctuation and grammar skills. Pupils enjoy creative writing, they have many opportunities to compose extended pieces and they are proud of their work. One pupil, typical of many, was keen to show off a story about an erupting volcano. Nevertheless, pupils' good progress in creativity and composition is not matched by their skills in the technical aspects of writing. Senior leaders acknowledge that broadening pupils' vocabulary and improving their confidence in spelling are priorities for the future.
- A third key line of enquiry looked at the effectiveness of senior leaders in maintaining and improving the quality of teaching and learning through the period of school re-organisation. Senior leaders have taken the best aspects of the middle school and successfully married these to new provision for younger pupils in the junior school. The transition was complex and challenging; still, it was achieved and pupils have responded well to the new arrangement. As a result of senior leaders' clarity of improvement planning, the focus on pupils' progress has been maintained throughout this turbulent period. Senior leaders are determined to improve pupils' outcomes in all year groups. They recognise that ensuring further improvement to the skills of all staff is the key to achieving this.
- Pupils have readily accepted the new school and are increasingly proud of it; they have embraced the new motto, 'my best always'. Pupils enjoy school and express confidence in their teachers. Attendance is above average and has risen in the last year, partly because parents and the school are forming an increasingly effective partnership.

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

Leaders and those responsible for governance should ensure that:

- teachers' questioning in mathematics is carefully planned to develop pupils' reasoning skills
- pupils' approaches to spelling are further developed so that more pupils reach their potential in assessments
- teaching continues to improve by sharing the effective practice in this school and other schools.

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

Yours sincerely

Paul Williams

**Her Majesty's Inspector**

### **Information about the inspection**

During the inspection, I held meetings with you and with middle leaders. I also met with the chair and vice-chair of the governing body. I met with a local leader of education (LLE) who is supporting the school and I held a telephone conversation with a representative of the local authority. I spoke with many pupils informally and I held a meeting with pupils from the school council. I made observations of learning across the school jointly with you and I looked at many examples of pupils' work. I took account of responses to Ofsted's online questionnaire from 12 staff, 14 parents and 16 pupils. I scrutinised a variety of documents, including the school's own evaluation of its performance and documents relating to safeguarding.