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Mr Stephen Powley  
Headteacher  
Withycombe Raleigh Church of England Primary School  
Withycombe Village Road  
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Dear Mr Powley

### **Short inspection of Withycombe Raleigh Church of England Primary School**

Following my visit to the school on 19 April 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.**

The leadership team has maintained the good quality of education in the school since the last inspection. You are ambitious for the school and, together with your strong leadership team, are driving forward the school's continuous improvement. You rightly value the challenge and support you receive from skilled governors. They have a detailed knowledge of the school's priorities and regularly check the effectiveness of leaders' actions.

Since the previous inspection, the school has grown significantly. You have successfully steered the school through the extension of the school premises as well as the changes in organisation that this has involved. You have sensitively maintained the ethos of a school which promotes the well-being of pupils and staff and strives for high academic standards. As one parent expressed it, 'you have built a large school with small school principles'. Pupils and parents value how you maintain the wide breadth of the curriculum and provide many opportunities for pupils to take part in musical and sporting activities.

The previous inspection identified the need for teaching to be more challenging so that more pupils, particularly the most able, reached the higher standards. You tackled this effectively and, as a result, attainment has risen steadily, particularly at the higher standard. Teachers' planning now takes account of the needs of all pupils and, across the school, pupils are enthusiastic learners who work diligently.

More recently, however, the progress pupils have been making towards new curriculum expectations in writing has been highlighted as a concern. You recognise the need to maintain the pace of improvements so that teachers always have the highest expectations of what pupils can achieve. As the school grows, you are also working closely with teachers to ensure that teaching is equally strong across classes within each year group.

### **Safeguarding is effective.**

You and the leadership team have ensured that all safeguarding arrangements are fit for purpose and that records are detailed and of high quality. New arrangements for recording concerns raised take better account of the need for sharing information quickly and securely across the school. All staff are trained effectively in line with the latest safeguarding guidance. Through feedback questionnaires, governors check on the impact of training in order to assure themselves that the culture of safeguarding is strong across the whole school.

Pupils feel safe in school. They value the 'classroom door' information about who to go to with a problem and wholeheartedly believe that teachers deal with any problems between pupils swiftly and effectively. Pupils said that, while friends sometimes have disagreements, they do not feel at risk from bullying. The vast majority of parents who replied to Ofsted's online questionnaire agree that the school responds well to any concerns they raise.

School leaders place a high priority on securing pupils' well-being and readiness to learn. Leaders intervene swiftly with bespoke support if pupils are troubled. Equally, leaders' engagement with outside agencies is robust and prompt when they have concerns that a pupil may be at risk.

### **Inspection findings**

- At the start of this inspection, we agreed the main areas we would focus on. Firstly, we looked at the steps the school has taken to improve pupils' progress in writing and, in particular, the progress of middle-ability pupils. Results in last year's national assessments for Year 2 and Year 6 highlighted a dip in the rates of progress made in writing. Leaders responded quickly and carried out extensive research to identify how the teaching of writing could be improved.
- You have raised teachers' expectations of what pupils can achieve. As a result, teachers now plan more accurately, taking into account what pupils already know and need to learn next. Leaders regularly monitor the progress that pupils are making; as one governor said, 'our focus is to measure the children's journey'. You swiftly support pupils at risk of falling behind and give additional guidance to teachers. These developments are relatively recent and you recognise that there is more work to do in ensuring that impact is seen equally in all classes.
- Pupils are keen writers. They are making good progress in writing different types of sentences with accurate punctuation and precise vocabulary. They use their learning in other subjects as the basis for both factual and expressive writing. For

example, Year 6 pupils wrote with great empathy when recording the feelings of a soldier at Dunkirk.

- Pupils edit their writing and proudly publish it on displays around the school. Pupils' books show that they are making good progress and write at standards which match those expected for their age. However, teachers do not encourage pupils to present their best work in books or to routinely use their most fluent handwriting. As a result, pupils' work is not always clear enough for them to check for accuracy.
- Our second line of enquiry was to examine how you and governors check the impact that additional funding is having on raising the achievement of disadvantaged pupils. Ambitious targets are checked regularly and you use assessment information to precisely identify pupils' needs and inform future support. As a result, disadvantaged pupils are making good progress and the most able disadvantaged pupils are making progress towards working at greater depth in mathematics and writing. In addition, you also use the funding well to support pupils' confidence and ensure they are included in all the school has to offer.
- We pursued an additional line of enquiry to check how support for pupils who have special educational needs and/or disabilities quickens their progress. Carefully timetabled sessions ensure that these pupils have full access to the curriculum. Our visits to classrooms showed that they are well supported by skilled teaching assistants. As a result, they take an active part in lessons and make progress in a wide range of subjects beyond English and mathematics. In many cases, this leads to pupils who have special educational needs and/or disabilities reaching the expected standard for their age.
- Over time, disadvantaged pupils and some who have special educational needs and/or disabilities have not attended as well as other pupils. You have worked closely with parents and external agencies to give the support needed to get pupils back into school. This has led to improvements in the attendance of both groups and attendance for disadvantaged pupils is now in line with the national average.

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

- Leaders and those responsible for governance should ensure that:
  - inconsistencies in the teaching of writing are eliminated quickly so that all groups of pupils make strong progress
  - teachers sustain high expectations of pupils' presentation and handwriting.

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 Devon. This letter will be published on the Ofsted website.

Yours sincerely

Wendy Marriott  
**Ofsted Inspector**

### **Information about the inspection**

During the inspection, I visited most classes, accompanied by you and your team, to observe teaching and learning and to hear pupils read. Together, we looked at a number of pupils' books. I spoke with pupils in lessons, at lunchtime and in a discussion group. I met with you, senior and middle leaders and two governors. I also spoke with an officer from the local authority.

I evaluated a range of documents including the school's self-evaluation, development plan and minutes of governors' meetings. I scrutinised school documentation in relation to safeguarding and assessment. I considered the views of the 178 parents who responded to Ofsted's online questionnaire, Parent View, and the responses to the questionnaires from 52 pupils and 29 members of staff.