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Mrs Sue Jezard
Executive headteacher
Malborough with South Huish Church of England Primary School
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Dear Mrs Jezard

Short inspection of Malborough with South Huish CofE 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 January 2014.

This school continues to be good.

The leadership team has maintained the good quality of education in the school since the last inspection.

Malborough primary school is a popular and friendly school which is well regarded in the community. Parents and families value the care, support and guidance that the school provides. From the early years to the end of Year 6, pupils are happy, feel safe and enjoy their education. Staff are hardworking and reflective, and are keen to learn from each other. Along with governors, you have worked hard to tackle the recommendations made at the previous inspection. Pupils' attendance is rising and there have been marked improvements to the quality and variety of the outdoor environment, including in the early years.

The school has a strong track record of preparing pupils for the demands of secondary school. Almost all pupils reach the standards expected for their age in reading, writing and mathematics by the time they leave Malborough. Nevertheless, you have rightly identified that more pupils should be reaching higher standards throughout the school, particularly in view of the strong start that children receive in the early years. You are making the improvements needed to teaching and the curriculum to ensure that more pupils reach a greater depth in their learning.

During this short inspection, I focused on a small number of key aspects of the school's work. Firstly, we decided to look at how well the school challenges all pupils

to achieve well, particularly the most able. Secondly, we agreed to evaluate the impact of actions to improve pupils' attendance to school. Lastly, we considered the impact of the governing body in supporting and challenging the school.

Safeguarding is effective.

The school's approach to safeguarding pupils is effective. Policy and procedures are clearly understood and closely followed. Training is regular and comprehensive, and leaders make sure that all staff, whatever their roles and responsibilities, are fully included. As a result, staff do not regard safeguarding as solely to do with preventing harm or the risk of harm to pupils. It speaks highly of the ethos and culture of the school that the importance of safeguarding also includes promoting pupils' health, welfare and well-being.

There is a robust and detailed approach to recording concerns. This helps staff to identify where children may be vulnerable or at risk. Leaders and governors have ensured that important issues such as the dangers of radicalisation and extremism are appropriately interpreted in the school's context. Leaders have responded quickly to issues such as the use of social media, making good use of external agencies to provide helpful advice to pupils and parents. Children have a good understanding of the risks associated with the internet and understand the importance of healthy and active lifestyles.

Inspection findings

- You have rightly identified that teaching should provide all pupils, particularly the most able, with more challenge and greater depth in learning. You have introduced improvements to teaching to raise expectations and support staff in understanding how to deepen pupils' learning. Pupils are responding well to this; they say they like being challenged, and always try to tackle the harder tasks or questions in class.
- Your focus on good-quality writing across the curriculum is also beginning to pay dividends. There are many examples of effective writing in English and in other subjects, such as science. Pupils are using their literacy skills to write in depth and at length across a range of genres. This reflects your emphasis on pupils showing how their learning is improving over time, using their 'progress books'. These books also show how staff are developing their teaching, reflecting on what works and adapting their approaches accordingly. Likewise, a systematic approach to improving pupils' spelling and grammar is proving effective, and is increasing pupils' knowledge of subject-specific vocabulary, including in science.
- In mathematics, you have ensured a focus on improving pupils' fluency and recall. This is helping to consolidate key skills in number and calculation, and is effective in identifying common errors and misconceptions and putting them right. You have rightly identified that this focus on fluency and recall should be matched by an emphasis on improving pupils' problem-solving skills and deepening their understanding of mathematical concepts and ideas.

- You have also identified that teachers' skills and subject knowledge are key areas for further improvement. You are providing a range of training and support, including through other schools in the federation. Teachers are playing an active part in contributing their ideas and experience, including through 'action research' in their classrooms. However, your checks on teaching do not always identify clearly enough the impact of these improvements on pupils' learning, including for the most able.
- You and your staff have worked hard to improve pupils' attendance. For some time, overall attendance has been lower than in most other primary schools. However, as a result of a more rigorous approach and through the help of external support, attendance is improving. Your work with parents and families is helping to make clear the impact of absence on children's education. Current figures show that overall attendance is now broadly average overall, and the number of pupils persistently absent from school is declining. Staff also keep a close eye on patterns of absence that might indicate safeguarding or welfare concerns.
- Governors have a good understanding of the school's strengths and areas for development. They are fully and closely involved in the life of the school and make every effort to check, at first hand, what they are told by leaders. Governors contribute to how the school evaluates the quality of its work and regularly reflect on how their impact could be improved.
- However, governors do not always have the information they need to understand the impact of the school's work. For example, they do not know enough about how additional funding, including the pupil premium and sports funding, is spent and the impact on pupils' achievement and participation. This is partly because school improvement planning does not make clear how the impact of specific actions will be checked and evaluated. Similarly, although leaders' plans are wide ranging and ambitious, they do not always focus sharply enough on the most pressing priorities for the school.

Next steps for the school

Leaders and those responsible for governance should:

- Further improve teaching to ensure that all pupils, including the most able, are consistently challenged to reach higher standards.
- Refine existing improvement plans and leaders' checks on teaching to focus more rigorously on the most important priorities for the school.
- Ensure governors have the information they need to understand the impact of additional funding on pupils' outcomes, including for disadvantaged pupils and for physical education and sport.
- Continue to work with parents and families to improve pupils' attendance.

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

Lee Northern
Her Majesty's Inspector

Information about the inspection

I held discussions with you and with staff at the school. I looked at your school improvement planning, records of the checks on teaching and at your school self-evaluation. I scrutinised safeguarding records and we considered evidence of how staff and governors assure pupils' safety, well-being and welfare. Together we visited classes, where we also looked at examples of pupils' work. Along with the head of school, we undertook a separate scrutiny of a sample of pupils' work from Years 2, 4 and 6. I met with three governors, scrutinised recent minutes of meetings of the governing body and looked at reports of 'learning walks' undertaken by school leaders in conjunction with staff from other schools in the federation. I met informally with pupils at different times during the inspection, including in lessons and at breaktime, as well as meeting a focus group of six pupils from Years 4, 5 and 6. I considered parents' responses to the online questionnaire, Parent View, and spoke with a small number of parents at the start of the school day.