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Mrs Anne Billington
Headteacher
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Dear Mrs Billington

Short inspection of Offwell Church of England Primary School

Following my visit to the school on 3 May 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 March 2014.

This school continues to be good.

The leadership team has maintained the good quality of education in the school since the last inspection. You and your governors have worked tirelessly to secure improvements in teaching and pupils' learning, and to establish an effective working partnership with parents. A cohesive team ethos permeates all aspects of school life and you promote the school's core values of 'caring, sharing, honesty, loyalty and forgiveness linked together by compassion' with enthusiasm and commitment. You have the respect of staff, pupils and parents alike because you communicate a clear vision of what you want Offwell School to provide for its pupils, families and community. You and your governors understand the school's strengths and take speedy action to tackle weaknesses. A set of procedures, easily understood by all, has been developed to enable leaders and governors to check the impact of actions taken. The leadership teams you have established work collaboratively and with success to improve teaching and pupils' learning. You communicate clearly your high expectations of staff and pupils and support them effectively to achieve their best.

At the time of the last inspection, you were charged with improving teaching further. You have succeeded in doing this by establishing a process of sharing best practice and engaging in professional dialogue. Staff now share a common understanding of what constitutes effective teaching. You make good use of individuals' expertise and links with local schools to support staff in continual development of their knowledge and skills. You have ensured that handwriting and punctuation are now taught in a systematic way and that pupils' responses to

written feedback on their work help them to improve. These strategies contribute well to the good progress pupils make. Parents' views of the school are very positive and reflect their increased confidence in the school's leadership. By improving the school's website and providing regular newsletters, you have ensured that parents receive good-quality information and guidance. You strongly promote the value of working in partnership with parents through the home/school link books and by ensuring that staff are accessible and approachable. You have actively sought to engage parents in the work of the school. Many parents volunteer on a regular basis, and others are involved in the parent forum. These opportunities contribute significantly to parents' high levels of satisfaction and trust in the school.

Pupils enjoy their time at school. They work together well and say their 'lessons are fun'. They feel well supported emotionally as well as academically. As one pupil stated, 'Teachers know us well and recognise when we're not okay and always help us.' Pupils believe that the strong emphasis you place on ensuring their emotional well-being helps build their confidence. They are sure that having this confidence helps with their learning. Pupils are developing good levels of resilience, which helps them to persist when facing challenges with their learning. Parents acknowledge these strengths in the school's provision. Comments such as 'a highly inclusive school with a great ethos', and 'a school where pupils are well cared for, nurtured, challenged and supported to develop a belief in themselves that they can achieve anything' were typical of those relayed to me during the inspection.

Safeguarding is effective.

Leaders and governors have ensured that all safeguarding arrangements are fit for purpose. You ensure that policies and procedures keep abreast of the most recent legislation and good practice. Regular update training and weekly checks during staff meetings ensure that staff are vigilant and mindful of the potential dangers to pupils. Staff understand what action to take if they have a concern about a pupil. They know how they can contribute to supporting the most vulnerable pupils, and families in challenging circumstances. Your extremely proactive and productive work with other professionals, such as social workers, ensures that referrals for early and more specialist support are managed very well.

Pupils report that they feel safe in school and would have no hesitation in seeking the support of an adult if they had a worry or concern. As one pupil put it, 'a worry shared is a worry halved'. Parents are confident that their children are safe and well cared for and express confidence in being able to seek help from you and your staff. The curriculum provides many opportunities for pupils to learn about how to keep themselves safe, including when using modern technology. The emphasis you place on supporting pupils' emotional development is a cornerstone of your work. Pupils say that the school's core values help them to 'think of others and develop positive relationships with each other'. Links with schools in other parts of the country and overseas have helped you and your team to establish a culture where difference, in whatever form it may be, is accepted and celebrated. This prepares pupils well for the realities of a world beyond the school gate.

Inspection findings

- We agreed that my first line of enquiry would be to explore the reasons for children's improved performance in the early years. Parents are sure that their children enjoy school and are learning well. One parent stated, 'I can't speak highly enough of the early years provision; my child has blossomed.' By admitting children aged over two years and nine months, you are now able to identify early those children who may need additional help or would benefit from greater challenge with their learning. Staff work very closely together and you have ensured that they have been able to visit other good-quality early years settings and engage in good-quality training. This has helped staff to improve the way they plan to meet children's needs in all areas of learning. Staff are constantly looking for ways in which they can modify the provision so that it supports children to make good, and sometimes rapid, progress.
- Encouraged by you, staff have developed the indoor and outdoor areas to provide a wide variety of interesting and engaging activities that capture children's imagination. Children develop an enthusiasm for learning. For example, during the inspection, children were very excited to watch adult birds flying in and out of a nest box to feed their young. Their sustained concentration was rewarded as they succeeded in capturing the event using a tablet camera. With the support of adults, children of different ages interact well. They look after each other and give each other much encouragement. You have ensured that the development of early reading, writing and mathematical skills has high priority so children get off to a very good start. Developing a love of reading is nurtured very well and fully supported by the strong partnership with parents. Comments written in children's home/school books show the high levels of cooperation, respect and trust established between parents and the early years staff.
- We also agreed to explore if teaching in key stage 1 is challenging enough, as in 2016 no pupils secured the greater depth standard in writing or mathematics. The specific additional needs and personal circumstances of some pupils contributed to this outcome. You have provided appropriate support with the result that these pupils, now in Year 3, have been helped to catch up quickly. Your emphasis on developing pupils' handwriting and punctuation is ensuring that more pupils in Year 2 this year are on track to reach the expected or greater depth standard than in 2016. Similarly, pupils' progress in mathematics is improving as a result of your focus on developing pupils' understanding of mathematical language and on the way they use their reading comprehension skills when solving problems. Not enough pupils, however, are confident in these aspects and some continue to require encouragement and support from adults.
- The third line of enquiry we agreed to look at was the progress made by pupils in mathematics through key stage 2. Pupils' understanding of numbers is very secure and they calculate accurately using a variety of methods. The most able pupils challenge themselves to complete calculations and record them in different ways. This broadens the options they have when making choices about how to tackle mathematical problems. As for key stage 1, the approach being taken to raise standards is to improve pupils' understanding of mathematical language and the way they use their good reading comprehension skills when solving problems.

Staff curriculum teams are working across the school in a cohesive way to help pupils to improve in these aspects. One strategy being employed is aimed at developing pupils' confidence and resilience so that they are less likely to give up when faced with a mathematical problem they find challenging. Pupils appreciate this approach and recognise in themselves that feeling confident helps them to learn. Pupils' work, their responses in lessons, and the information held in school about pupils' progress indicate that, although more remains to be done, a good start has been made to raising standards further in mathematics.

- Finally we explored the reasons for pupils' success in reading. You have ensured that learning to read has the highest priority from the early years through to Year 6. The school's mantra of first we 'learn to read then read to learn' is promoted strongly across the school. Pupils are exposed to a wide range of texts and adults encourage pupils to see that being able to 'lose yourself in a book' is a pleasurable and fun thing to do. Effective teaching of phonics through the early years and key stage 1 ensures that pupils have the skills to read unfamiliar words. Reading comprehension is fostered very well, with the result that pupils in key stage 1 can give full and balanced answers to questions about a text, and these skills are developed very well through key stage 2. The involvement of parents who share books with their children and listen to them read at home contributes significantly to pupils' success in reading. It is an example of the very positive impact of strong partnership working now established in the school.

Next steps for the school

Leaders and those responsible for governance should ensure that:

- across year groups, pupils improve their understanding of mathematical vocabulary, and make best use of their good reading skills when solving mathematical problems so they can reach even higher standards.

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

Alison Cogher
Ofsted Inspector

Information about the inspection

During the inspection, I held meetings with you, your senior teacher and the early years leader and nursery nurse. The chair and vice-chair of the governing body met with me to discuss the actions taken since the last inspection and the strategic vision for the school's future. I conducted a telephone conversation with a representative of the local authority. I considered your self-evaluation and school

improvement action plans. I looked at safeguarding records and recruitment and vetting procedures. The views of parents were gathered through their responses to Ofsted's online questionnaire, Parent View. I also spoke to a number of parents as they dropped their children off at school. Responses to the staff and pupil questionnaires were taken into account. I spoke to pupils at playtime and during lessons. I also spoke to a group of pupils from Years 4, 5 and 6. Together, you and I visited mathematics lessons in Years 3, 4, 5 and 6. We also visited the early years, and Year 1 and 2 classes. We looked at the school's information about pupils' progress and samples of pupils' work from Years 2, 4 and 6.