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14 June 2107

Mr Richard Somerwill  
Headteacher  
Stoke Canon Church of England Primary School  
Stoke Canon  
Exeter  
Devon  
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Dear Mr Somerwill

### **Short inspection of Stoke Canon Church of England Primary School**

Following my visit to the school on 13 June 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 June 2012.

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

The leadership team has maintained the good quality of education in the school since the previous inspection. Stoke Canon is a nurturing school that empowers pupils to achieve. At the heart of this village school is a strongly shared commitment to inclusion and equality of opportunity, underpinned by a vision of respect for all. All pupils, regardless of background, race, faith or disability are cared for and supported to achieve. Parents typically described the school as a 'proper community' with a 'lovely atmosphere' where their children receive personal care. They said that staff communicate regularly with parents and work with them closely to provide support where necessary. Parents also value the wide range of visits pupils make to places such as Killerton, which deepens the enjoyment and quality of their children's learning. Pupils said that they particularly enjoy this aspect of their learning.

Leaders know the school and its pupils well. You and your leadership team are focused on continuous improvement. Staff and leaders at all levels successfully work hard to make sure that all groups of pupils receive a consistently good quality of education. You are aware of the areas for improvement, such as language skills for children in the early years and outcomes for different groups of pupils. Governors are also strongly aware of what needs to improve in the school. They possess a wide range of skills and professionalism that allows them to provide the necessary degree of challenge and support. This ensures that leaders stay focused on the key issues.

Pupils in most year groups, regardless of ability and background, make good

progress in their different subjects as they move through the school. This is because they are taught well by teachers who use their subject knowledge confidently to prepare interesting and stimulating work. Pupils demonstrate mostly positive attitudes to learning because they enjoy the work, are curious to know more and want to improve their work. They follow instructions carefully, pay avid attention to the teacher and work very well with each other. Pupils not only behave well in lessons but also during breaktimes around the school site. They are polite and respectful to one another and said that they have very few friendship problems in the playground.

Since the previous inspection, you have successfully devised a more efficient system of assessing progress in Reception Year and the pre-school. You have done this by introducing more rigorous monitoring of the steps that children make in their learning and linking them closely to the development statements in the early years curriculum. You have also implemented a more regular cycle of monitoring of lesson quality. You and your governors not only evaluate the quality of learning through lesson observations, but also through detailed and regular scrutiny of pupils' work in books. This has enabled leaders to match staff development more closely to pupils' needs. Your action plans clearly demonstrate a relentless focus on an improving picture for pupils' outcomes.

At the beginning of the inspection, we agreed on the key lines of enquiry to be considered during the day. These included establishing the effectiveness of actions taken to raise the achievement of all groups of pupils across the school and evaluating the effectiveness of teaching, learning and assessment in the early years. We also agreed to consider pupils' engagement with the curriculum and whether the curriculum was relevant, exciting and meeting their needs. We also considered whether safeguarding is effective. These lines of enquiry are considered below under 'Safeguarding' and 'Inspection Findings'.

### **Safeguarding is effective.**

A culture of safeguarding, safety and welfare is paramount throughout the school. You have ensured that policy, practice and procedure meet all statutory requirements, including the safer recruitment of staff. Leaders, along with the governing body, make sure that these arrangements are robust and are kept fully up to date. All staff are well briefed on current policies, to keep up to date with requirements.

Staff know and understand what they should do if they have concerns about pupils. They follow up issues in a timely manner and ensure that no pupil comes to harm. Where necessary, leaders work very well with external agencies to safeguard children's welfare and ensure that vulnerable pupils and their families receive the support they need. The positive culture of keeping all pupils safe is illustrated by the ability of pupils to express what it means to feel safe. They reported that they understand that safety is about feeling safe in school and online, as well as outside school, at places such as the beach. Pupils particularly value the 'worry box' in school where they post any concerns they have, knowing that they will be dealt

with in a timely and confidential manner by a teacher.

Your actions to improve attendance have been successful. Overall attendance of pupils in Stoke Canon is above the national average. However, for a very small group of pupils, attendance is stubbornly low. You recognise that there is more to do to ensure that this improves and you are continuing to take decisive action.

### **Inspection findings**

- A minority of children start school with skills that are well below what is typical for their age, particularly in the core skills of reading, writing and communication. They make good progress from their starting points, and the number of children reaching a good level of development is rising over time. Outcomes in 2016 were below the school's expectations. However, by carefully analysing the information for each child, you have ensured that provision is in place to enable almost all children to catch up by the end of Year 1.
- Pupils, particularly disadvantaged pupils, achieve well in the phonics check in Year 1. Here, figures have been in line with or above the national average for the last three years. The quality of phonics teaching in the early years, particularly aimed at engaging boys in learning letters and sounds, ensures a good start to children's reading and writing skills. However, the school's handwriting policy and practice are not applied consistently across all classes.
- Differences have diminished between the progress of disadvantaged pupils and other pupils in the school and nationally in all subjects. This is the result of good teaching and learning activities precisely meeting pupils' needs.
- Leaders have identified that boys do not always make the progress of which they are capable, particularly in writing. They are taking swift action to tackle this by, for example, ensuring that the curriculum captures boys' interests from early years up to Year 6.
- The number of pupils achieving at greater depth in key stage 1 was above national figures in 2016. The current Year 2 cohort shows strong progress from very low starting points. Current pupils in Year 6 have made good progress over the year and a higher percentage than national are attaining the higher levels in reading, writing and mathematics in the school's own assessments. However, guidance from teachers does not routinely help pupils to understand what they need to do next in their learning.
- Evidence scrutinised during the inspection shows that all groups of pupils, including those who have complex needs, are making good progress. However, school leaders and governors are aware that, due to small cohorts, attainment and progress outcomes continue to fluctuate in reading, writing and mathematics.
- The curriculum is lively and exciting. It provides pupils with opportunities to acquire knowledge across the full range of subjects, such as geography, history, science, physical education and outdoor education. You have worked hard to broaden creative opportunities for pupils and make learning fun. For example, during the inspection, the Reception class visited a local National Trust property

to further their learning. Pupils said that they value visits out of school. However, leaders acknowledge that they could enhance curriculum planning further through developing areas such as technology, cross-curricular activities and modern British values.

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

Leaders and those responsible for governance should ensure that:

- they continue to improve the quality of teaching, learning and assessment by:
  - extending curriculum planning to incorporate more cross-curricular opportunities for learning, particularly focusing on technology and modern British values
  - making sure that pupils understand more clearly what their next steps in learning are
  - taking action to support speaking, listening and writing skills for children in the early years.

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

Julie Jane  
**Ofsted Inspector**

### **Information about the inspection**

During this inspection, I met with you and with the leader responsible for the early years. I spoke to a group of pupils and individual pupils around the school as well as representatives of the governing body. I also had a telephone conversation with a local authority representative.

We made visits to lessons to observe pupils' attitudes to learning and took a learning walk around the school. We also scrutinised the work in pupils' writing and other books across a range of ages and abilities.

I considered a range of documentary evidence, which included the school's self-evaluation, the school improvement plan, information on pupils' current progress and attendance. I also considered safeguarding referrals and child protection records, including the single central record. We discussed a wide range of matters relating to pupils' safety and welfare, including staff recruitment procedures.

In addition, I took account of 44 responses to the Parent View online survey, 33

responses to the pupil survey and 14 responses to the staff survey issued during the inspection.