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Mr Wayne Higgins
Headteacher
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Dear Mr Higgins

Short inspection of Kingsbury Episcopi Primary School

Following my visit to the school on 29 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 October 2012.

This school continues to be good.

The leadership team has maintained the good quality of education in the school since the last inspection. Leaders and teachers are working systematically on the right aspects for improvement. Consequently, the school continues to improve.

Parents are very positive about the education their children receive. Almost every parent who responded to the online survey, Parent View, said that they would recommend the school.

Since the previous inspection, there have been a number of changes to the teaching and leadership team. You have managed these changes well. For example, the relatively new English leader is making a discernible difference across the school and, as a result, improvements in writing are widespread.

Governors are highly strategic. Changes to the governing body have resulted in refinement to the way they work. As a result of their hands-on approach through regular visits and meetings, they are fully conversant with the many strengths of the school and the aspects that require further work. Governors hold you and your team to account with rigour.

At the previous inspection, you were asked to develop teachers' questioning to help pupils develop their thinking and enable them to develop independence in learning. Pupils have excellent attitudes to learning; they investigate with confidence and use teachers' questions to deepen their understanding. The way that pupils respond to

teachers' feedback through reviewing and editing their work enables them to build on their learning successfully. Pupils spoken to on inspection said that this gives them real ownership of their work. As a result, workbooks exemplify that pupils' progress is good overall.

Rightly, you identify that challenging the middle-attaining and most able pupils even more to achieve the highest standards is a key priority.

Safeguarding is effective.

Leaders, including governors, have responded promptly to the local authority safeguarding audit. As a result, policies, procedures and training relating to safeguarding meet requirements and are up to date with current legislation.

Timely intervention and active engagement with multi-agency support is documented and followed up precisely by designated safeguarding leaders. You have ensured that staff know how to use and apply their safeguarding training within their daily routines and work to minimise pupils' risk of harm.

Every parent who responded to the online questionnaire, Parent View, reported that their child is safe at school and well looked after. Pupils agree. They say they feel safe in school and if they have any concerns, they know who to go to. They say that adults help them sort things out quickly. They are conversant with how to keep safe online and are risk-aware about keeping safe on the school site.

Inspection findings

In order to ascertain that the school remained good, a key line of enquiry was to establish the effectiveness of the teaching of writing across key stages 1 and 2. This is because at key stage 2 in 2016, pupils' outcomes and progress in writing were markedly lower than in reading and mathematics. In addition, too few middle-attaining pupils at key stage 1 met the standards that are expected for their age.

- You have wasted no time in tackling the relative weaknesses in writing across the school. Changes to the strategic leadership of English have secured improvement quickly. Current leaders' systematic approach to improve writing is effective.
- Initially, you led a school-wide focus on improving pupils' presentation, handwriting and spelling. This has resulted in teachers and pupils having higher expectations. Consequently, pupils write neatly and with greater stamina and accuracy.
- The second phase of improvement, ably led by your new English leader, has been effective in firmly establishing and fine-tuning teachers' understanding of the assessment of writing. Regular moderation within school and across a cluster of schools has strengthened teachers' understanding of the skills pupils must apply to write at the highest standards. As a result, these aspects are taught with greater rigour. Because of this, pupils in key stage 2 are able to apply their understanding of sentence structure and punctuation with greater success and

impact.

- Across key stage 1, teachers' expectations of what pupils can achieve in their writing are routinely high. Pupils make consistently good and often rapid progress in their writing. As a result of good teaching in lower key stage 2, the middle-attaining pupils that did not reach the standards expected for their age at key stage 1 are catching up quickly.
- The English leader has a clear understanding of strengths and aspects that still require further work. For example, she identifies that the third stage of improvement is to make challenge more immediate in a few classes so that middle-attaining pupils gain more practice at developing writing that meets the highest standards.

Another aspect I looked at was how well the middle-attaining and most able pupils were challenged in mathematics at key stage 1. In 2016, a smaller than average proportion of middle-attaining girls reached the standards that are expected for their age.

- The teaching of mathematics is bringing about pupils' progress that is good overall. In recent months, there has been a greater focus on teaching pupils to apply their understanding of mathematics and solve problems. However, you know that this is new and a few girls are not yet achieving as highly as boys in key stage 1.
- The areas for improvement in mathematics are not yet as firmly established as they are in English. As a result, although the most able pupils make sound progress in mathematics overall, their progress is not yet as rapid as that of the middle- and lower-attaining pupils. You know this is a key priority for the school.

Over a number of years, pupils' achievement in reading has been high and consistently above the national average. In 2016, high standards in reading were maintained at the end of key stage 2. However, at key stage 1, while outcomes remained in line with the national average, a few middle-attaining pupils did not meet expected standards. I looked at these pupils' progress now they are in Year 3, along with the school's strategy for teaching reading.

- Pupils use and apply their phonics skills well to tackle unknown words. Systems to support regular reading and interventions to help pupils who have fallen behind to catch up are making a positive difference. Leaders' checks on pupils' reading development enable pupils to get the specific support and help they need. As a result, these pupils read with greater fluency and accuracy.
- Activities led by the teacher to develop pupils' comprehension skills are gradually enabling pupils to deepen their understanding of what they read. However, independent activities do not consistently allow pupils to apply their understanding of comprehension. As a result, some pupils gain ample practice at retrieving information from texts, but this does not develop their understanding of the themes and events in stories as proficiently as it could.

Another key line of enquiry looked at the rigour with which leaders, including governors, hold the school to account to raise pupils' outcomes even further. This is because there was some variance in pupils' performance information for specific groups of pupils in 2016, including for a small number of pupils who have special educational needs and middle-attaining girls at key stage 1.

- Governors are highly strategic and understand the strengths and weaknesses in the school. Governors check the impact of funding and support for specific groups of pupils, including those who have special educational needs and/or disabilities. Pupil premium funding and funding for service pupils is accounted for and governors' monitoring in this regard is increasingly effective.
- Senior leaders undertake regular checks on pupils' learning, including book scrutiny and through meetings with teachers. However, leaders' checks do not take into account pupils' prior attainment. As a result, progress of the most able pupils is not fully accounted for. Governors have not insisted that this group of pupils is monitored routinely.
- The headteacher holds teachers to account through regular meetings to review pupils' performance. For example, timely interventions for pupils who have special educational needs and/or disabilities are effective in accelerating pupils' progress in spelling and phonics. However, you accurately identify that the progress of this group of pupils needs to be checked more precisely so that the progress these pupils make in their classwork is as rapid as it is in small-group and individual intervention work.
- A small minority of parents who responded to the online questionnaire, Parent View, reported that they would like more information about their child's progress.

Next steps for the school

Leaders and those responsible for governance should ensure that:

- the teaching of mathematics challenges middle-attaining pupils and the most able pupils to reason and solve problems in mathematics so a greater proportion of pupils reach the highest standards
- leaders' checks on teaching and learning take full account of pupils' prior attainment so that any gaps in learning are identified and middle-attaining pupils and the most able pupils make consistently rapid progress in writing and mathematics
- governors insist that the information they receive takes full account of all groups of pupils, including the most able and pupils who have special educational needs, so that the impact of leaders' actions to sustain pupils' high rates of performance can be accurately measured.

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

Julie Carrington

Her Majesty's Inspector

Information about the inspection

During this inspection, I spoke with you, senior and middle leaders, and a group of governors. I had telephone conversations with a representative of the local authority. I made visits to lessons to observe pupils' attitudes to learning and to scrutinise their work. I talked with a group of pupils to gather their views of the school and listen to them read.

I considered a range of documentary evidence, which included the school's self-evaluation, development plans, school performance information, attendance, behaviour and safeguarding documentation.

In addition, I took account of 71 responses to the Parent View online survey and free-text messaging service. I gathered the views of staff through the online questionnaire and through discussions during the inspection.