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Mrs Penny Hammett  
Executive Headteacher  
Awliscombe Church of England Primary School  
Awliscombe  
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Dear Mrs Hammett

### **Short inspection of Awliscombe Church of England Primary School**

Following my visit to the school on 18 July 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 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 have created a school community which is a vibrant place where pupils are eager to learn and keen to achieve their very best. Pupils' current progress is strong and the overall quality of education good. At the time of your appointment as executive headteacher in September 2015, this was not always the case. A period of turbulence in leadership and staffing during that period resulted in some disharmony with parents and the local community. Your calm and measured focus on pupils' learning, allied with your steely determination to tackle weak teaching, is one of the key reasons the school remains good.

You and your head of school are highly ambitious for the pupils and school community as a whole. Your settled staff and strong team of teaching assistants contribute well through strong teamwork to school improvement. Effective behaviour policies are used well, alongside detailed pastoral care processes. A rich and engaging curriculum successfully supports pupils' personal development and well-being together with engagement in successful learning. Parents and governors are fully supportive of you, your team and the changes that are occurring at the school and they share in your ambitions for the pupils you serve.

You draw well on the support provided from your federation of schools. Joint activities to check the judgements being made on pupils' performance are increasing teachers' expertise in this process, especially in English and mathematics. Staff feel well supported and training is developing their confidence and enhancing

their repertoire of classroom management strategies well. Federation governors are deeply involved in the school's work. Frequent meetings with the executive headteacher and head of school keep the chair abreast of the developments occurring. Careful planning by leaders is making the most of the skills available across the federation and proving successful in securing improvements.

You continue to have success in tackling the areas for improvement identified at the time of the last inspection. Learning takes place at a brisk pace and activities planned match pupils' prior attainment so they can move on rapidly to new challenges. Older pupils know their targets and next steps in learning and use this knowledge to review their achievements successfully. Your accurate self-evaluation and careful monitoring pinpoint the next steps in the school's development. You are therefore aware that your curriculum in mathematics requires development, that pupils' deeper knowledge in foundation subjects is a priority and that pupils need to apply their knowledge, skill and understanding of spelling, grammar and punctuation more accurately during writing tasks.

### **Safeguarding is effective.**

All involved in the school community are committed to keeping pupils safe. You make sure all necessary checks are made to confirm that those who wish to work with children are suitable. Training for safeguarding and child protection is up to date, regular and welcomed, enabling staff and governors to discharge their duties fully. Pupils and parents are confident that issues are followed up. Pupils are knowledgeable about matters of safety because of planned activities in the curriculum. For example, routine activities, such as walking to the school field, are used well to reinforce aspects of road safety.

Your strong emphasis on pupils' personal development promotes their positive behaviour, with respect and courtesy as the norm. Pupils have, through your behaviour approaches, been successfully prepared to adopt de-escalation strategies on the rare occasions these might become necessary. Effective links with outside agencies help to cater for vulnerable pupils. Your strong commitment to pupils' safety is demonstrated through your plans to further develop your work on e-safety. While this work is perfectly adequate, you feel greater involvement from staff, pupils, parents and governors would further enhance the support. Overall, the leadership team has ensured that all safeguarding arrangements are fit for purpose and of a high quality.

### **Inspection findings**

- One area we explored was how well girls were performing. Girls demonstrate very positive attitudes to learning and study. They readily complete tasks and work well on the wide range of interesting activities provided. Girls are therefore making good progress. Far more girls than boys attend the school than is typically found in other schools nationally. You therefore watch the performance of this group carefully. Some girls in key stage 2 are reluctant to push themselves when writing and prefer a 'safe option', for example with their choices of

vocabulary. This limits even better progress.

- Your analysis of girls' performance in mathematics, following their performance last year, revealed that while girls' attainment was good, they were reluctant to risk error in mathematics. This hindered them from learning from mistakes and bettering their performance. Training to develop pupils' mathematics skills is bearing fruit, particularly in Years 5 and 6. On our learning walk, we particularly noted girls' readiness to think more deeply and explain their reasoning. For example, Year 5 and 6 girls confidently tackled conundrums that challenge assumptions such as '6 divided by  $\frac{1}{2} = 3$ ' and they provided a deep explanation as to why mistakes are often made when dividing fractions. When looking at work in older pupils' books, we found this type of questioning is a more consistent feature of everyday mathematics work.
- We also explored how well the most able pupils are being stretched. Your approaches are successful in English especially. Pupils spoken to about their work showed a good understanding of a range of genres in English and concepts in mathematics. Pupils use their well-developed skills of inference and deduction when reading to pose questions and provide thoughtful commentaries about challenging texts. However, they are yet to demonstrate the same depth of knowledge or understanding in foundation subjects, for example when explaining how Britain shaped the world. Pupils are also less familiar with key people in British history, such as Nelson, Churchill, Wellington and Shakespeare, along with their impact on the world. Similarly, they are less secure about human and physical processes in geography.
- Pupils enjoy your chosen approach to challenging their learning in daily lessons. Pupils' progress is improving because they are guided well by teachers to start their activities from what they know, understand and can do. Challenges move pupils' learning on quickly, and at increasing levels of difficulty, because no time is lost covering work they already understand.
- You have been focusing on mathematics as an area for improvement so we looked at this subject closely. The curriculum in mathematics is not enabling pupils to achieve as well as they can. Across the school, concepts are not developed sufficiently well. Topics jump from one area of mathematics to another and present as a 'piecemeal' approach. You have clear plans in place to address this issue.
- Some good examples of mathematics exist, for instance, in Years 5 and 6. Complex problems are set which challenge pupils' thinking well, such as requiring pupils to solve area calculations logically when designing allotments as part of their topic work. Pupils demonstrated good reasoning skills when required to explain why some information was required while other information was redundant, clarifying their thinking well.
- Younger children read and write well and achieve high standards by the end of Reception. They read with confidence and are technically accurate. Children show some early signs of developing more complex reading skills such as inference and deduction. In many cases, children routinely use their good knowledge of phonics to aid them when writing and spelling.

- Finally, we investigated how well pupils' technical knowledge of spelling, grammar and punctuation was being used in their day-to-day writing. The teaching of writing is providing a clear structure for developing pupils' understanding of the purpose, organisation and features of different genres. Pupils use their good knowledge and imagination to create clear writing for a range of purposes, for example when, in Years 3 and 4, writing stories containing a dilemma. When the purpose and organisation of a text is taught alongside the technical aspects of writing composition, pupils' progress is rapid. Occasionally, teachers do not focus closely enough on the word, sentence or punctuation development of pupils' writing. At times, spelling and phonological errors go unnoticed in pupils' work. Consequently, as work in pupils' books illustrates, some pupils are repeating the same mistakes. In these instances, basic literacy skills for pupils are not developed well enough.

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

Leaders and those responsible for governance should ensure that:

- pupils use their knowledge of spelling, grammar and punctuation when writing and adults check pupils' progress in these aspects more carefully
- the curriculum in mathematics is developed so that understanding of concepts is fully developed within and across year groups and all pupils are supported to reach even higher standards
- pupils' knowledge, skill and understanding in foundation subjects is further improved.

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

Richard Light  
**Her Majesty's Inspector**

### **Information about the inspection**

During the inspection, I held meetings with you, the head of school and all teachers. Four members of the governing body, including the chair, met me to discuss the actions taken since the previous inspection. I held a telephone conversation with a representative from the local authority. The views of a number of parents were gathered through their responses to Ofsted's online questionnaire, Parent View. Visits to classrooms were conducted jointly with you to evaluate the impact of teaching on pupils' learning, to review the quality of pupils' work over time, and to listen and talk informally with them about their experiences of school. We evaluated a range of documentary evidence including documents relating to safeguarding and governance.