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Mrs Jo Wardally
Headteacher
Barwick and Stoford Community Primary School
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Dear Mrs Wardally,

Short inspection of Barwick and Stoford Community Primary School

Following my visit to the school on 13 September 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 2013.

This school continues to be good.

The leadership team has maintained the good quality of education in the school since the last inspection. The school has experienced a great deal of staffing turbulence in the last two years. You have made your expectations clear, and shown determination and resolve to improve the quality of teaching. You have made astute choices to move teachers into new areas of responsibility and develop their skills. Consequently, morale in the current staff team is high. There is now a palpable sense of togetherness. The chair of the governing body was appointed in September 2015. Several new governors have joined since then. The governing body is now well equipped to provide you with a good level of both challenge and support. This has been a critical factor in enabling you to raise teachers' expectations of what pupils can achieve.

The school was slow to respond to the curriculum changes that have taken place since the previous inspection. Pupils' progress was not as strong in 2015 and 2016 as it had previously been, and so their attainment in key stage 2 was lower than in previous years. Working closely with the new chair of the governing body, you have responded decisively to this dip in performance. Provisional results for key stage 2 in 2017 show that pupils' progress has improved significantly. Standards in reading, writing and mathematics were all above average last year and current pupils are also on track to achieve well.

At the same time as raising academic standards, you have managed to maintain the

ethos of this small village school. Teachers know their pupils very well. Pupils feel well supported. As a result, they behave well and are thriving. In particular, pupils who have special educational needs and/or disabilities receive good-quality support and feel included. Some parents expressed concerns about the number of changes of staff in the recent past and said they were dissatisfied with communication from the school. However, inspection evidence shows that at the present time the school has a settled and capable staff group. The majority of parents are happy with the quality of education the school provides and have confidence in the school leadership. The number of pupils on roll is rising, and so the school moved from three to four classes last year.

You were asked at the previous inspection to provide pupils with more opportunities to write at length. Many examples of pupils' extended writing can now be seen around the school. You were also asked to make the improvement planning process more effective. You have achieved this: your improvement plans are now sharper and clearly understood by staff.

Following a dip in key stage 1 phonics screening check results in 2016, you have worked to achieve greater consistency in the way early reading skills are taught. Pupils' reading skills in key stage 1 have improved as a consequence. You correctly identified pupils' achievement in mathematics as a target for improvement last year. As a result of changes to the key stage 2 mathematics teaching programme, more Year 6 pupils reached the expected standard. However, there is still more to be done to improve pupils' confidence in mathematics further. Your recent work to improve pupils' attendance and punctuality has had some success. The overall attendance figure is still below the national average and so you are right to identify this as a priority for the future.

Safeguarding is effective.

You have ensured that all safeguarding arrangements are fit for purpose and all staff are suitably trained in safeguarding procedures. You maintain detailed records and keep all safeguarding matters under scrutiny. Inspection evidence shows that you have acted decisively where safeguarding concerns are raised. Your communication with outside agencies is timely and effective.

Pupils feel safe and are well cared for by staff at school. Pupils receive and understand advice about potential risks and how to stay safe in different situations. These include, for example, the risks associated with using the internet. Pupils respect each other and, consequently, all pupils feel included, no matter what their background. Bullying is very rare, but, when it does happen, teachers deal with it promptly and effectively. An overwhelming majority of pupils said they would recommend this school to others. The majority of parents strongly believe that their child is happy and well looked after at school.

Governors and senior leaders ensure that the school site is safe and secure. For example, school leaders, working with the local authority, have quickly taken preventative action in response to subsidence in one part of the Victorian building.

Classrooms and outside teaching areas are well cared for by staff. As a result, the environment in the school is interesting, inviting and safe for pupils. The chair of the governing body ensures that all governors are well informed about safeguarding matters. The governing body is, therefore, well equipped to oversee this area of the school's work effectively. In your role as designated safeguarding lead, you have successfully established a culture where keeping pupils safe and secure is seen as everyone's responsibility.

Inspection findings

- Senior leaders have worked successfully with independent advisers and with representatives of the local authority to evaluate the impact of actions to improve pupils' progress. Consequently, senior leaders and governors have an accurate understanding of the strengths and weaknesses of the school. They are ambitious for the pupils and recognise that the improvements achieved so far need to be sustained.
- To ascertain that the school remained good, the first key line of enquiry centred on pupils' reading skills in key stage 1. The proportion of pupils reaching the expected standard in the Year 1 phonics screening check in 2016 was considerably lower than in previous years. Pupils did not have the necessary skills because there was an inconsistent approach to teaching phonics. Senior leaders rearranged the way these skills are taught and provided teachers with extra training. A far higher proportion of pupils attained the expected standard in the phonics screening check in 2017. Better phonics teaching has resulted in pupils becoming more confident readers. For example, pupils in Years 3 and 4 read with fluency and good expression during the inspection. Although their confidence has increased, some pupils select only a limited range of texts to read when they apply their skills in later years.
- Another line of enquiry looked at pupils' progress in mathematics in key stage 2. The proportion of pupils who attained the expected standard in mathematics by the end of Year 6 in 2016 was below the national average. Too little emphasis was placed on the teaching of reasoning and problem-solving. Throughout last year, the mathematics teaching programme was refocused on these skills. Consequently, pupils' progress has improved considerably. Provisional results for 2017 show that the proportion of pupils attaining the expected standard in mathematics is now well above the national average. However, there is still scope to bring new teaching ideas and methods into the programme. A new middle leader with responsibility for mathematics is well equipped to do this.
- A third line of enquiry considered rates of pupils' attendance. The overall rate of pupils' attendance was just below the national average in 2016. Senior leaders have speeded up the school's response to poor attendance. In particular, the school has worked with individual families to help overcome barriers to good attendance and punctuality. As a result of this work, there has been some improvement in pupils' attendance overall and some improvement in disadvantaged pupils' attendance, but further increases are necessary.
- Following improved monitoring of the quality of their work, teachers across the school are now expecting more of pupils and stretching them. This has resulted

in a rapid increase in the proportion of pupils attaining the expected standard in reading, writing and mathematics at the end of key stage 2, particularly disadvantaged pupils. Senior leaders' success in improving the quality of teaching, learning and assessment provides a good platform for future improvements. The school is now in a good position to build on this by developing teachers' skills further and so ensuring that more pupils attain a greater depth of understanding across the curriculum.

Next steps for the school

Leaders and governors should ensure that:

- pupils are encouraged to read a wider variety of books from different genres
- middle leaders review and revise the key stage 2 mathematics teaching programme to improve its effectiveness further
- pupils' attendance and punctuality are improved, particularly of pupils who are persistently absent from school
- teachers' skills are enhanced further by developing the links already established with other schools to share good practice.

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

Paul Williams
Her Majesty's Inspector

Information about the inspection

During the inspection, I held meetings with you, senior leaders, the chair of the governing body and four other governors. I held telephone conversations with a representative of the local authority and an independent adviser who has worked with you. I held a meeting with pupils from the school council and spoke with many other pupils informally at break and lunchtime. I made observations of learning across the school jointly with you. I looked at several examples of pupils' work and spoke with pupils during lessons. I scrutinised a variety of documents including the school's own evaluation of its performance, assessment information, safeguarding documents, records of checks leaders make on the suitability of staff to work with children and information relating to attendance. I met with several parents before school and at the end of the day. I took account of responses to questionnaires from 17 pupils and seven staff. I also considered 29 responses from parents to the Ofsted online questionnaire, Parent View.