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Mrs Jane Gascoigne
Headteacher
Shoscombe Church School
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Dear Mrs Gascoigne

Short inspection of Shoscombe Church School

Following my visit to the school on 19 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 May 2014.

This school continues to be good.

The leadership team has maintained the good quality of education in the school since the previous inspection. Your hard work and that of the staff have ensured that the school continues to improve. Throughout this period, you have acted swiftly and decisively to ensure that pupils continue to achieve well in their learning.

Leaders and governors have an accurate and realistic understanding of the school's current strengths and areas for improvement. Your actions are well targeted in addressing any weaknesses. Leaders implement a range of school improvement initiatives that are tightly focused on improving outcomes for pupils. You draw well on the support provided from your federation of schools and external agencies. Leaders are increasingly effective in checking pupils' performance and teachers' subject knowledge. Governors act with conviction, providing leaders with an appropriate balance of challenge and support. They articulate a secure understanding of the school's previous assessment results, and understand the purpose and intentions of the school's main actions for improvement.

Throughout my visit, pupils displayed positive attitudes to their learning. My discussions with pupils revealed that they are happy at school and feel safe and well cared for. Parental views on the work of the school are variable. The majority of parents who responded to the online questionnaire, Parent View, agreed that pupils feel safe at school and are taught well. A small minority of parents raised concerns around the school's communication. However, my discussions with parents confirm that this is an area that is improving.

Safeguarding is effective.

The school's approach to safeguarding pupils is effective. Safeguarding arrangements are fit for purpose. Most staff have a clear understanding of the school's policies and procedures around safeguarding. However, you acknowledge that some newly appointed staff need to undertake training on the 'Prevent' duty and female genital mutilation. Safer recruitment procedures meet requirements.

You and your staff ensure that concerns about pupils' welfare are logged and escalated swiftly when necessary. You maintain detailed records to track vulnerable pupils and any action undertaken in school or by external agencies. Leaders responsible for safeguarding ensure that interventions are having the desired impact on supporting children and their families. Pupils I spoke to agreed that they have a trusted adult they can go to with a worry or a concern. They have a secure understanding of how to stay safe when using the internet. For example, pupils know that if they see anything inappropriate on the internet then they should tell an adult immediately.

Part of our discussions around safeguarding focused on pupils' attendance. The most recent published information shows that overall absence is above the national average for pupils entitled to free school meals and those who have special educational needs and/or disabilities. Due to the nature and size of these significant groups, attendance can vary from year to year. You have put a range of measures in place to successfully monitor and improve pupils' attendance. Our discussions around attendance revealed your in-depth knowledge of individual cases and the positive impact your work is having in this area. These actions are proving to be successful as you are now seeing a steady improvement in the attendance of pupils in some significant groups.

Inspection findings

- My first line of enquiry focused on evaluating leaders' actions in ensuring that children make strong progress in the early years, particularly in writing. Leaders identified weaknesses in children's skills in managing and manipulating tools. As a result, well-targeted actions have been put in place. These are now ensuring that children can make the progress of which they are capable. Our visit to the early years highlighted a range of strategies, used consistently, to support and develop early mark-making skills. Evidence in children's writing now shows that they are making better progress. In 2017, there was a significant increase in the proportion of children in the early years who met the expected standard in writing.
- Leaders know the strengths and weaknesses in the early years well. They make effective use of external agencies to support children with specific learning needs. Our visit to the early years showed that children are motivated and interested in a wide range of activities. They behave well and interact positively with their peers. The actions that you and your staff have undertaken resulted in a greater proportion of children leaving the early years well prepared for Year 1.
- I also focused on evaluating leaders' actions in ensuring that pupils, particularly

the most able, make strong progress in writing. This is because in the 2017 key stage 2 tests, no pupils were working at greater depth in writing. Leaders now analyse pupils' writing in detail and use this effectively to target actions for improvement. For example, evidence in books shows that pupils are being encouraged to use a wider range of more complex devices and techniques to successfully engage the reader.

- The key stage 1 results for 2017 in writing confirm that an increased proportion of pupils in Year 2 are now exceeding standards that are expected for their age. My scrutiny of pupils' writing highlighted the positive impact the school has had in improving the quality of descriptive writing. For example, pupils are now more adventurous in the language they choose to describe a setting or a character. However, leaders acknowledge the need to challenge pupils further, particularly the most able, to deepen and extend their writing skills, both in English and across the curriculum.
- My next line of enquiry focused on evaluating leaders' actions in improving pupils' phonic knowledge in key stage 1. Leaders' actions have ensured that there is greater consistency in the quality of phonics teaching. As a result, pupils' performance in phonics is improving steadily. Teachers use a range of strategies to meet the specific needs of individuals and groups. Their accurate articulation of phonemes enables pupils to grasp new sounds effectively.
- Pupils apply their phonic knowledge successfully to work out unfamiliar words when they are reading. As a result, they are usually confident and resilient to persevere with unfamiliar words. However, some gaps in phonic knowledge can hold pupils back. Leaders recognise the need to embed the school's approaches to supporting phonics further, particularly for the lower-attaining pupils.
- My final line of enquiry evaluated how well leaders and governors are demonstrating the capacity to drive improvement. Subject leaders are equipped with the necessary skills to be effective at checking and improving the quality of teaching and pupils' achievement. Leaders are ambitious in their roles and hold high expectations for what pupils can achieve. As a result, leaders' actions are having a positive impact on improving outcomes for pupils. They demonstrate good capacity to drive school improvement initiatives.
- Leaders are responsible, hard-working and conscientious. They are adept at setting clear goals, rooted in school improvement priorities. Minutes of governors' meetings show that they hold school leaders to account for pupils' performance. They use information about the school's performance to challenge leaders on the impact that their actions are having.

Next steps for the school

Leaders and those responsible for governance should ensure that:

- the teaching of writing challenges pupils, particularly the most able, to deepen and extend their writing skills, both in English and across the curriculum
- the school's approaches to phonics teaching are further embedded to secure strong progress, particularly for the lower-attaining pupils.

I am copying this letter to the chair of the governing body, the director of education for the Diocese of Bath and Wells, the regional schools commissioner and the director of children's services for Bath and North-East Somerset. This letter will be published on the Ofsted website.

Yours sincerely

Neil Swait
Ofsted Inspector

Information about the inspection

During this inspection, I spoke to you and the assistant headteacher, six members of the governing body, parents and pupils from across the school. I made visits to lessons to observe pupils' learning and to scrutinise their work. I also listened to individual pupils read in Years 2 and 3.

I considered a range of documentary evidence, which included the school's development plans, attendance and monitoring records and safeguarding documentation.

In addition, I took account of 12 responses to the Parent View online survey. There were no responses to the staff or pupil surveys to take into consideration.