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Dear Mrs McMahon

Short inspection of Avonmouth Church of England Primary School

Following my visit to the school on 10 October 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 November 2012.

This school continues to be good.

The leadership team has maintained the good quality of education in the school since the previous inspection. As headteacher you have high aspirations for pupils. You challenge both teachers and pupils to continue to improve their work to ensure that pupils reach the best outcomes they can. You, your senior leaders and governors evaluate the school's performance accurately and identify clear actions to raise standards. For example, your actions to improve the teaching of phonics have reaped rewards. The percentage of pupils who reach the expected standard in the Year 1 phonics screening check rose, in two years, from below national average figures to 90%. You track and monitor pupils' progress during the year and robustly hold teachers to account for the progress of pupils. This means that the pupils' achievement continues to improve. Pupils say that they enjoy learning and many are keen to improve their work. The curriculum helps pupils to learn well. For example, during the inspection, a number of classes were seen where pupils used learning from their history studies to prepare extended pieces of writing in their English work. The school is a calm and orderly environment. Pupils behave well around the school building, at break and lunchtimes and within lessons.

At the time of the previous inspection the school's leaders were asked to ensure that the quality of teaching was consistently good across the school. Through their careful use of professional development, feedback and effective use of systems for appraisal and the management of staff, leaders and governors have made sure that the quality of teaching that pupils receive is now consistently good. As a result, as demonstrated by the work in their books, pupils across the school are making faster

progress.

The school was also asked to develop more shared leadership and extend the role of subject leaders. Since the previous inspection both you and the deputy headteacher have taken up your current posts. You have developed a team of leaders who share your vision and aspirations for pupils. Leaders play a full role in monitoring standards, particularly in English and mathematics. Thanks to the training you have provided, and the direction you give, leaders use assessment and tracking information well to monitor pupils' progress. The school's leaders have a purposeful relationship with governors, reporting information that enables governors to gather useful information about pupils' progress and standards. Governors use this information well to challenge school leaders about the progress that pupils make.

Safeguarding is effective.

School staff know the pupils in their care and their families well. Leaders ensure that safeguarding arrangements are fit for purpose and records are carefully maintained. The school communicates clearly that safeguarding is everyone's responsibility, including in the information on the school's website. Regular up-to-date training means that school staff know what to do if they have a concern about a child. Governors monitor the school's safeguarding work, for example through completing regular safeguarding audits. Safeguarding is a standing agenda item at all governors' meetings.

Pupils say that they feel safe in school. They are clear that they know whom to talk to if they have a worry or concern and that adults will quickly help them. The majority of parents responding to the Parent View survey agree that their children are safe and well looked after in school. Pupils have a clear understanding of bullying and say that this does not happen often and that it would be sorted out briskly. The curriculum helps pupils to learn how to keep themselves safe, for example when using new technologies and the internet.

Inspection findings

- During the inspection, I looked at how well different groups of pupils, especially those in the middle-attaining group, achieve in school. Careful assessment and tracking of pupils' progress means that leaders and teachers know clearly which pupils are not making the progress they should. They are swift to put in place closely targeted interventions to help boost pupils' learning. Staff review these interventions regularly to ensure that they are effective in rapidly improving pupils' learning. As a result, the progress of current pupils, including middle-attaining pupils, disadvantaged pupils and those who have special educational needs and/or disabilities, has improved. In particular, the work of pupils with middle and low prior attainment currently in Year 2 and Year 3 provides clear evidence that their progress is improving.
- Next, I explored with you how well pupils at the school write. In 2016 the proportion of pupils reaching the expected standard for their age in writing was

below the national level at Year 2 and Year 6. In 2017 there has been an increase in the number of pupils reaching the expected standard for their age in writing in both year groups. However, in some year groups there is still a gap between pupils' progress in writing and mathematics when compared with the better progress that pupils make in reading.

- Scrutiny of pupils' work during the inspection showed that writing is improving across the school. For example, in the current Year 2, pupils are making better progress since the start of the year. Many already write in a clear and legible handwriting style. Many pupils make good use of their improving knowledge of phonics to spell complex words, for example when describing a story setting. Pupils who left the early years having reached the level expected are already being challenged to work towards a deeper level in their writing.
- Across key stage 2, teachers' accurate subject knowledge and high expectations are helping pupils of all abilities make better progress in writing. For example, in Year 6, effective questioning and feedback to pupils enables them to improve the structure and grammar of their work quickly. In Year 3, clear and precise explanation enabled pupils to understand the purpose of brackets in a play script quickly. When I examined pupils' work I could see that standards of handwriting and spelling are improving in response to the expectations of the new curriculum. Nonetheless, there are still pupils at the top of the school who need to catch up on these skills. Leaders also recognise that sometimes the school's feedback policy is not consistently applied in drawing attention to inaccuracies in pupils' spelling. This means that some pupils do not pick up the skills necessary in spelling to work at the highest level.
- My next line of enquiry was to check how well disadvantaged pupils do in the school. Leaders monitor closely the progress of disadvantaged pupils. They have put in place effective strategies, such as additional opportunities to read to adults in school and specific interventions for writing. Because of these strategies, disadvantaged pupils are making more rapid progress, particularly in reading and writing. Teachers' expectations for disadvantaged pupils are high and, as a result, their progress is improving in all three subjects, particularly at key stage 2. Disadvantaged pupils' attendance is improving so that it is now closer to that of other pupils. Governors have a clear rationale for allocating the additional funds for disadvantaged pupils and have ensured that this money is effectively spent.
- The progress of pupils who have special educational needs and/or disabilities has improved and many make good progress from their different starting points. The interventions they receive, for example in mathematics, are helping pupils to make accelerated progress.
- Lastly, I looked at the rates of pupils' attendance. Over time, pupils' attendance has been below the national level. However, it is improving, particularly in key stage 2, where current pupils' attendance is at or above national average levels. This is the result of the school's focus on attendance, which includes your weekly monitoring. The attendance of those pupils who are often absent is improving because of links built by pastoral leaders with families to help them overcome barriers to good attendance.

Next steps for the school

Leaders and those responsible for governance should ensure that:

- improvements in writing are embedded securely across the school, paying particular attention to the quality of pupils' handwriting and spelling
- pupils are provided with learning that is sufficiently challenging and deepens their thinking in mathematics and writing.

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

Yours sincerely

Sarah O'Donnell
Ofsted Inspector

Information about the inspection

I met with you, senior leaders and governors. We talked about developments in the school since the last inspection. I looked at safeguarding records and tested out your recruitment and vetting procedures. I held discussions with governors, including the chair of the governing body, and talked with a representative of the local authority. I talked to teachers and support staff around the school. Together, we visited lessons and carried out a learning walk across the school. We talked to pupils about their learning and looked at their books. I asked pupils to read to me from the texts they were working on in their classes, from their work and from their reading books. I observed and talked to pupils at breaktime and I met a group of pupils to talk about their life at school. I considered the eight responses to the online survey, 'Parent View' and the eight comments submitted.