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Mrs Philippa Hill  
Headteacher  
Wimborne St Giles Church of England First School and Nursery  
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Dear Mrs Philippa Hill

### **Short inspection of Wimborne St Giles Church of England First School and Nursery**

Following my visit to the school on 18 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 June 2013.

#### **This school continues to be good.**

The leadership team has maintained the good quality of education in the school since the last inspection. Following your appointment in September 2015, you quickly identified weaknesses and set about improving the school with rigour, determination and passion. You have achieved this admirably because you place the children at the heart of your decision-making and are relentless on their behalf. This is noted by all who come into contact with the school, especially parents, two of whom said, 'The headteacher has turned the school around' and 'Mrs Hill is an outstanding headteacher who devotes her time and energy to the school in order to improve standards and encourage a more positive learning experience for all children.'

Working alongside you is an effective governing body. Governors play a key role in challenging underperformance and raising expectations through the decisions that they make. For example, the decision to bring the Nursery into the school in 2016 is having a positive impact as the children are making rapid progress and are very well prepared for school.

You also ensure that the culture and ethos of the school reflect the values of 'respect, courage, compassion, perseverance and unity' that play a key role in helping pupils to learn and develop across the school day. Pupils feel supported and valued. One child, whose view was typical, told me, 'This is a really happy school. We all look after each other.' A parent said, 'This is a beautifully nurturing little

school, which excels in shaping children's minds whilst allowing them to be children.'

Since the previous inspection, you have focused on improving the quality of teaching, learning and assessment. There have been changes to the teaching staff along the way. Your clear expectations now ensure that teachers and pupils understand what is expected of them. This is resulting in improved outcomes. In lessons, tasks are typically well matched to pupils' needs so that pupils make good progress. However, as we discussed, there are still some inconsistencies, most notably in enabling the higher-attaining pupils to reach the highest standards of which they are capable in mathematics. In addition, pupils' high-quality writing is not consistently reflected in all subjects, particularly in science, for example, where recording, predicting and writing are comparatively weaker. However, these are areas that you have identified and targeted for improvement.

A further development point at the last inspection challenged school leaders to give children more opportunities to develop their personal and social skills in the Reception class. You and the governing body have taken effective action to address this by improving the quality of teaching and provision in the early years. As a result, children are well prepared for key stage 1.

### **Safeguarding is effective.**

You, other staff and governors are effective in keeping children safe and promoting a strong culture for safeguarding. Pupils feel safe and show a strong understanding of how to stay safe, for example when they are working online. Initiatives such as the school's 'e-cadets' serve to raise awareness and give pupils direct responsibility in safeguarding matters. Furthermore, you show determination and resilience to protect children. In particular, there are occasions when you have referred pupils to external agencies and shown tenacity in making sure that pupils are looked after and protected.

Staff and governors receive appropriate and timely training in safeguarding. Staff are aware of the designated leads for safeguarding, although there is a lack of clarity for some in understanding the school's whistleblowing procedures. Overall, though, staff respond positively to pupils and know what to do when they listen to pupils and how to record and pass on any concerns. The leadership team ensures that all safeguarding arrangements are fit for purpose, orderly and robust. Pupils have confidence in the adults in the school. They say that they feel safe and enjoy coming to school. This is reflected in the much-improved attendance rates at the school, which are now just above the national average.

### **Inspection findings**

- My first line of enquiry evaluated how well teaching, learning and assessment are improving outcomes for pupils. Teachers know the pupils very well and plan activities and tasks that are suited to meet their needs, including those who have special educational needs and/or disabilities. You hold high-quality professional

conversations with teachers about pupils who need to catch up or make accelerated progress. These identify and target specific areas for improvement and have precise and measurable milestones. As a result, pupils are well supported to make good progress and build on their prior skills, knowledge and understanding in reading, writing and mathematics.

- We agreed that there are times when pupils are not consistently challenged to deepen their mathematical knowledge and reasoning. Furthermore, teachers do not consistently adapt or respond quickly enough when they see that pupils have mastered a particular skill, such as partitioning to show a secure understanding of place value. This slows pupils' progress, particularly that of the most able, who have the potential to use and apply their skills sooner to achieve more.
- Teachers make effective links to promote learning across the curriculum. This adds breadth, depth and meaning to pupils' learning. For example, pupils in a mixed Years 3 and 4 class have been retrieving information from texts and videos about Diwali before completing artwork about this. However, standards in writing are not consistently strong in all subjects, especially science, as teachers do not have the same high expectations of pupils' writing outcomes.
- My second line of enquiry focused on the quality of teaching and provision in the early years. This is because there has been an improvement in children's outcomes over time. Your ethos and belief in children 'getting it right, right from the start' are paying dividends. You have invested wisely in establishing a vibrant and effective early years unit with the introduction of the Nursery in 2016. This is giving children a good start, particularly in supporting early development in personal, social, emotional, language and communication skills. Adults have good relationships with the children and effectively model language, communication and interaction skills, which gives the children a solid base to build on. The approach to building the children's independence is also regarded as a priority. As a result, children leave the Nursery fully ready for the Reception Year. They then capitalise on this further in Reception, so that many children make good progress to attain a 'good level of development'. However, you have rightly identified that the school does not enable enough children to go beyond this and 'exceed' enough of the early learning goals at the end of the Reception Year.
- My third line of enquiry focused on the quality and effectiveness of phonics teaching. Outcomes in the Year 1 phonics screening check have improved consistently. This is also reflected in the Year 2 phonics retakes and end of key stage 1 reading test scores. You ensure that a rigorous daily approach to the teaching of letters and sounds is fully adhered to. Teachers and teaching assistants have good subject knowledge. They use this to teach phonics so that pupils build and apply their knowledge incrementally and in purposeful steps. This approach also enables pupils to gain confidence in applying their skills in reading and writing. You have modelled sessions for teachers that have been effective in sharing and establishing consistently good practice. Finally, individualised phonics support is effective in helping targeted pupils to catch up well.
- My fourth line of enquiry considered the capacity and effectiveness of leadership and management to sustain school improvement. You lead the school with

tenacity. Together with an effective governing body, you meticulously check your own work and that of other leaders and teachers. You set ambitious but achievable targets with precise timescales to bring about improvement. As a result, senior leaders, including governors, have an accurate view of the school and its trajectory of improvement. Furthermore, you have not hesitated to hold others to account to make necessary changes and improvements in teaching.

- Governors are influential in bringing challenge and holding you to account. They ask intelligent questions that they check and follow up through first-hand visits. This is empowering them to make the right decisions in their quest for improvement.
- Together with the governing body, you have taken the right steps to introduce a middle leadership team consisting of, for example, the new science and mathematics subject leaders. However, being new to these roles, they do not yet have the full range of skills or proficiency to lead independently. You have wisely ensured that this is a priority in your current school development plan.

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

Leaders and those responsible for governance should ensure that:

- the most able pupils are consistently challenged to reach the highest standards they are capable of in mathematics
- pupils write to the same high standards across the curriculum, especially in science
- subject leaders are skilled and well trained to have a positive impact on school improvement.

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

Yours sincerely

Stewart Gale  
**Her Majesty's Inspector**

## **Information about the inspection**

We agreed the timetable and inspection activities at the start of the inspection. I worked extensively with you across the whole day. I scrutinised safeguarding records and we discussed a wide range of matters related to safeguarding, including staff recruitment and vetting procedures, and recent audits. I reviewed evidence that shows how you work and liaise with multi-agency partners to keep children safe. Together, we visited lessons across the school, including the Nursery. We scrutinised pupils' workbooks. I spoke with a range of pupils in line with our agreed key lines of enquiry. I also met with representatives of the governing body and reviewed school documents, including the school's self-evaluation summary and samples of governors' visit reports. I also held discussions with the local authority adviser and the school's Diocesan challenge partner. I took full account of responses on Parent View as well as other surveys, including the 31 free-texts received for the inspection.