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Mr Marcus Capel
Headteacher
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Dear Mr Capel

Short inspection of Timberscombe Church of England First School

Following my visit to the school on 7 November 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.

Until September this year, the school was one of two in the Beacon Federation. Since September, both schools have joined with three other first schools to form the Moorland Federation. A new governing board has been established that includes some of the governors previously on the Beacon Federation board. The expertise of some governors who are no longer in post as a result of this restructuring has been retained through the creation of a forum of 'school guardians'. The guardians conduct a range of activities on behalf of the governing board. The reports they produce broaden the scope and depth of information available to governors to inform their decision-making. A clearly communicated expectation is that pupils' standards will rise in each of the schools in the federation, but that the individuality of each school will not be lost. At Timberscombe, the school's ethos 'to live, love and learn together' continues to be promoted strongly.

You and your governors have encouraged staff to embrace the opportunities available to them through the federation and, more widely, through the West Somerset Education Partnership. This has made a positive contribution to improved teaching. In particular, staff have welcomed the opportunity to check the accuracy of their assessment. This has ensured that planning is pitched precisely to provide the right balance of support and challenge to move pupils' learning on quickly. As a

result, across the school, more pupils achieved greater depth in their learning this year in reading, writing and mathematics.

You ensure that everyone at the school takes great care to support pupils' personal development, as well as their academic achievement. Parents are very strongly supportive of the school. Comments such as 'school offers my child a very special environment in which to learn, develop and grow' and 'I feel genuinely fortunate to be able to send my child to such a school' were typical of those expressed by many parents. You and your staff lead by example and have ensured that the school is valued and supported by the community it serves. Pupils are enthusiastic about their learning and enjoy their time at school. Relationships throughout the school are very positive. Pupils report feeling encouraged in their learning by teachers who challenge and support them to do their best.

You and your staff have successfully resolved the areas for improvement raised at the previous inspection. Teachers now provide pupils with clear guidance as to the steps they need to take to improve their writing. This, together with raised expectations and the introduction of a handwriting programme across the school, has improved the quality and quantity of written work that pupils produce in all subjects. Pupils are confident writers and are keen to record their ideas. Their knowledge of phonics remains strong, but there is more to do to ensure that their spelling is consistently accurate.

Safeguarding is effective.

You and your governors have ensured that all safeguarding arrangements are fit for purpose. You have created a strong culture of vigilance with regard to safeguarding. You communicate very clearly that making sure that pupils are safe and well cared for is the responsibility of everyone in the school and wider community. Training for staff and governors is up to date so they know what to do if they have any worries about pupils' safety or welfare. Concerns about pupils are shared in staff briefings so that any necessary action or support can be provided in a timely way. Your high-quality records are detailed and well maintained. You work very closely with outside agencies so that, when appropriate, pupils and their families receive well-targeted specialist help quickly.

Pupils report that they feel safe at school, and their parents agree. 'I know my child is well cared for and safe in the school environment' was typical of the views expressed by parents. They also recognise the 'strong family feel' in the school, where younger pupils can learn how to behave from older pupils. Pupils of all ages get along well, look after each other and develop respectful and trusting relationships with each other and adults. The comment 'grown-ups look after us' was typical of the confidence expressed by many. Pupils behave well and report that they would happily talk to an adult if they had a worry. The curriculum provides many opportunities for pupils to learn how to keep themselves safe. They talk confidently about managing personal risk, including when using modern technology.

Inspection findings

- In some recent years, not all children in the Reception class achieved a good level of development. I explored how well these children are helped to make enough progress so that they reach the expected standard in reading, writing and mathematics by the end of Year 2. The reasons children do not achieve a good level of development are varied. Planning, based on accurate assessment, takes full account of pupils' individual needs and ensures that they receive targeted support so that they move on quickly with their learning. A culture of 'it's okay to make a mistake, so have a go' is well established. Staff respond quickly when pupils indicate that they are unsure about any aspect of their work. As a result, pupils' confidence and resilience grow and they make good progress.
- Most pupils reach at least the expected standards by the end of Year 2. Expectations of what they can achieve have been raised as a consequence of teachers attending high-quality training. For example, pupils are often challenged to explain their reasoning when completing calculations. This approach, together with the increased emphasis on the use of practical resources, is helping pupils to develop a greater depth of mathematical understanding. Pupils who need help to develop good reading skills are given individual support. As their competence increases, they see reading as an enjoyable activity that also allows them to have access to learning in other subjects. Pupils write confidently. Typically, they construct and punctuate their sentences with a good degree of accuracy. Their spelling of commonly used words, however, is not consistently correct.
- We next agreed that I would explore how well pupils make progress through Years 3 and 4 so that they are well prepared for their move to middle school. Planning for these year groups has improved and pupils make good progress in reading, writing and mathematics. Activities are precisely focused on moving pupils' learning on quickly. For example, when learning about adverbs, pupils were asked to play a game where they acted out the verb 'in the manner of the adverb'. By actually walking quickly or slowly, pupils soon understood that an adverb describes how something is being done, and they also noted that these words end in 'ly'.
- The accuracy of pupils' reading is good, although their understanding of what they read is not as strong. Consequently, although pupils are confident and prolific writers, the range of vocabulary they use to make their written work engaging for the reader can be somewhat limited. Pupils' spelling of commonly used words, as well as those linked specifically to subjects or topics, is not consistently accurate. This sometimes suppresses the overall quality of their written work. Pupils demonstrate increased confidence and accuracy when solving mathematical problems and completing calculations. They can explain their reasoning when asked to do so, and are keen to rise to the challenges they are set. Thorough transition arrangements support the continuity of pupils' learning, so they are able to move on to middle school with confidence.
- Finally, we agreed that I would check how well pupils who have special educational needs and/or disabilities are supported to make good progress across the school. You and your special educational needs coordinator have ensured that the school's procedures for identifying and supporting these pupils are very

clear, and consistently applied. You have developed a close working partnership with parents so concerns are identified and tackled quickly. Assessments identify the often very specific barriers that are stopping pupils from learning well, and you take prompt action to resolve these. You make frequent checks to ensure that the support being provided is making a positive difference to pupils' learning. You are quick to modify this support if necessary, and embrace the guidance of outside specialists to ensure that pupils make the best possible progress. You recognise that, alongside specific knowledge and skills, pupils' capacity to help themselves is a key factor in their long-term success. Pupils' self-help skills are nurtured so they can, for example, check their spellings or ensure that they have formed their letters correctly. This helps build pupils' confidence so they keep trying and make good progress as a result.

Next steps for the school

Leaders and those responsible for governance should ensure that pupils across the school:

- develop greater accuracy in spelling, including the most commonly used words and those specifically linked to subjects or topics
- develop a greater understanding of what they are reading
- use a wider range of vocabulary to enrich their written work.

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 Somerset. This letter will be published on the Ofsted website.

Yours sincerely

Alison Cogher
Ofsted Inspector

Information about the inspection

During the inspection, I spoke with you and your literacy leader. Five governors, including the chair and vice-chair of governors, met with me to discuss the actions taken to form the Moorland Federation, and the aspirations for the school's future. I spoke to parents at the start of the school day, and to pupils during their lessons and at breaktime. I conducted a telephone call with a representative of the local authority. Together we made visits to lessons, scrutinised information about pupils' progress and looked at their work in books. I took account of the 32 responses to Ofsted's online questionnaire, Parent View, and considered the views expressed by staff and pupils through their questionnaires. I examined a range of written

evidence, including the school's self-evaluation and improvement plans and attendance and safeguarding documentation.