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2 February 2018

Lisa Crew
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Dear Mrs Crew

Short inspection of Salway Ash Church of England Voluntary Aided Primary School

Following my visit to the school on 23 January 2018, 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 September 2013.

This school continues to be good.

You demonstrate confident and sure-footed leadership, informed by experience, professionalism and a proven track record. During your tenure as headteacher, pupils' achievement has been consistently high. This is because you never rest on your laurels; you are always looking to improve aspects of the school's work.

You are the first to acknowledge that the school's achievements are a team effort, however. You are well supported by the senior teacher in her role as special educational needs coordinator and you are currently strengthening middle leadership. Staff morale in the school is high. All staff who responded to the staff survey, issued during the inspection, agreed that they feel proud to be a member of staff at the school. There is a collective buoyancy which energises staff to do their best for the pupils. This is because staff are encouraged to take responsibility for their work, develop their expertise and exercise their professionalism. They feel trusted and supported by leaders to do this. Nearly all staff who responded to the staff survey stated that leaders support their professional development and promote improvement.

Over the years, you have forged a constructive relationship with governors, who support you in your work. They are closely involved with the school because they are highly committed and passionate about their role. This is demonstrated in the weekly newsletter, 'Governors' News', produced by governors for parents to celebrate the school's achievements. They understand the importance of transparency, approachability and close working with parents and carers.

Governance has continued to strengthen since the last inspection. Consequently, governors are increasingly adept at using different sources of information to hold you to account. They have capitalised on training to ensure that they ask the right questions, focused on the achievement of different groups of pupils.

Leaders, governors and the wider staff have fostered a school culture in which all pupils are known and valued for who they are. This is a happy school where pupils feel they belong. It is warm, welcoming and dynamic. Pupils learn to be aspirational, to work hard and to be resilient in the face of failure. At the same time, the school's Christian ethos instils in pupils a respect for values such as kindness and tolerance. Staff have high expectations of behaviour. As a result, pupils are well mannered and considerate of each other. For example, pupils greeted me with 'Good morning' and held doors open for me during the inspection. Parents are also welcomed and encouraged to become involved in the life of the school. Tellingly, 100% of parents who responded to Ofsted's Parent View online survey agreed that the school was well led and would recommend it. One parent commented, 'As soon as you step into school you feel learning is at the centre of everything!' Another parent said, 'The school puts the interests of the children first.'

At the beginning of the inspection, we agreed on the key lines of enquiry to be considered during the day. These included establishing the effectiveness of actions to ensure that pupils make the progress of which they are capable in writing and mathematics at key stage 2. The second line of enquiry considered the effectiveness of leaders' actions to ensure that more pupils achieve the higher levels in mathematics in key stage 2. Finally, we considered whether safeguarding is effective. These lines of enquiry, where they have not already been referred to, are considered below under 'Safeguarding' and 'Inspection findings'.

Safeguarding is effective

You and the senior teacher, as the designated safeguarding team, have a firm understanding of procedures and responsibilities. Consequently, you have ensured that all staff have received the appropriate child protection training. Registers are kept to enable you keep track of who has had particular training. Checks to ensure that staff are suitable to work with children are comprehensive, up to date and kept securely.

Staff know the procedures to follow should they have concerns about a child. The online referral system stores information chronologically and indicates staff involvement and action taken to resolve issues. Where issues are complex and ongoing, the system enables you to monitor situations closely.

The culture of the school helps pupils to understand risk, to make appropriate choices and take responsibility for their own safety. They also understand the value of being supportive of each other. Pupils who spoke with me reported that they feel safe in school because, 'We have trusted adults who will help you.' They also told me that bullying 'is very rare' and dealt with effectively when it does occur. Pupils are able to articulate the difference between bullying and lower-level misunderstandings.

Inspection findings

- Teachers have good subject knowledge which enables them to teach with confidence. They have benefited from training which has helped to bolster these skills. Leaders have been quick to identify individual staff training needs and use external partnerships, such as the West Dorset Collaboration, to meet those needs.
- Teachers use their subject knowledge and understanding of the pupils to plan stimulating activities. These are tailored to the needs of pupils of different abilities so they can access and enjoy their learning, regardless of ability. Teaching assistants provide effective support to this end, helping targeted pupils keep pace with their peers through helpful prompting and questioning.
- Pupils exhibit very positive attitudes to learning. This is because they are set work which has the right level of challenge for them. The work encourages pupils to 'have a go' and persist when tasks are not easy.
- Pupils also enjoy their learning because they benefit from positive relationships with their teachers. They know they are in a safe space to contribute to discussion and ask questions without fear of getting answers wrong. Pupils told me they are helped in different ways if they struggle with their learning. For example, one pupil said staff 'will give you pointers to get to the answer', without giving the answer itself. Pupils listen attentively to their teachers, talk enthusiastically with partners and want to be involved.
- Pupils across the school are making strong progress in all subjects. However, pupils' progress does not currently match their very high attainment, particularly in writing and mathematics.
- Leaders were quick to identify that not enough pupils achieved the higher levels in mathematics and English grammar, punctuation and spelling by the time they left the school in 2017. They closely analysed the reasons for underperformance by interrogating different sources of information. Leaders have rightly prioritised increasing pupils' mastery of mathematics, particularly for the most able, and are taking appropriate action. Inspection evidence indicates that current pupils are making sufficient progress to achieve the higher levels in English grammar, punctuation and spelling.
- Teachers are providing feedback which challenges pupils, particularly the most able, to achieve at greater depth. Pupils are being prompted to consider concepts and ideas more deeply. They are being asked to present their working and explain their thinking in order to reinforce understanding. Pupils know if they have been identified by their teachers as being capable of achieving at the higher levels. They are able to articulate the ways in which they are being encouraged to reach them.
- Pupils' work shows that they are being presented with more opportunities to solve problems, in addition to developing their calculation skills in mathematics. The most able pupils enjoy these challenges. Lower-ability pupils' work shows their level of determination in grappling with difficult concepts. Through perseverance and appropriate help from their teachers, pupils improve their understanding and make good progress over time.

- Staff are taking the right action to improve pupils' mastery of mathematics, and pupils are making more progress as a result. However, leaders acknowledge, given its prominence in the school development plan, that this is a work in progress.

Next steps for the school

Leaders and those responsible for governance should ensure that:

- action continues to be taken to increase pupils' progress in mathematics and writing at key stage 2 so that it matches their attainment by the time they leave the school.

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

Steve Smith
Her Majesty's Inspector

Information about the inspection

During this inspection, I spoke to you, representatives of the governing body, pupils and the school evaluation partner.

You and I visited lessons to observe pupils' attitudes to learning. I also scrutinised the work in pupils' books.

A range of documentary evidence was considered, which included the school's self-evaluation and school improvement plan. I considered governing body minutes and records of the monitoring of teaching. I also reviewed information relating to pupils' progress. Additionally, I scrutinised various safeguarding records, including those relating to the suitability of staff to work with children.

I took account of 57 responses to the Parent View online survey and 12 responses to the staff survey issued during the inspection.