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Mrs Clare Wilmott
Head of School
Lapford Community Primary School
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Dear Mrs Wilmott

Short inspection of Lapford Community Primary School

Following my visit to the school on 11 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 March 2014.

This school continues to be good.

The leadership team has maintained the good quality of education in the school since the last inspection.

You took up your present role in September 2017, having previously been the senior teacher at the school. You have taken swift action to sustain the school's strengths and to address the areas of its work that need to improve. In this endeavour, you are very well supported by the executive headteacher and the board of trustees from Chulmleigh Academy Trust, of which the school is a member.

Leaders at all levels are keenly aware that the performance of pupils in mathematics needed to improve and have taken decisive action to secure notable improvements in teaching and outcomes. You are aware, however, that further work is needed here to consolidate these improvements. Leaders have also successfully addressed the areas for improvement from the previous inspection report in March 2014. For example, pupils' basic numeracy and literacy skills are now more securely embedded across the school.

As it was at the previous inspection, Lapford Community Primary School is a positive and nurturing learning environment. When asked what the best thing about the school is, one pupil commented, 'We are all friends.' This view was shared by other pupils. Community links are strong. One illustration of this is the effort that parents and other residents of the village put into improving the school's facilities. Recently,

this involved repainting the interior of the school and developing the early years outdoor area.

Safeguarding is effective.

In your role as the designated safeguarding lead, you have ensured that there is a strong culture of safeguarding characterised by a high degree of staff vigilance. Your work with external agencies is well managed and you are not afraid to challenge them when you do not get the response you feel is appropriate. You and other leaders have ensured that all safeguarding arrangements are fit for purpose. Training is up to date, records are well maintained and the pre-employment checks on teachers and other staff are thorough.

Pupils receive effective teaching to help them stay safe in school, outside it and when online. They have a particularly good understanding of the work the school does to keep them safe. In conversation, for example, they can describe how the school's system of different coloured lanyards for visitors works or how to avoid potential risks when using the internet.

Inspection findings

- My first line of enquiry on this inspection related to the performance of pupils at key stage 2 in mathematics, particularly the most able. Recently, the performance of pupils in the national curriculum assessments had been below the national average. In response, leaders have taken decisive action to address this. New teaching staff in Year 6 and changes to the curriculum have resulted in the progress of current pupils being much stronger than past results suggest. You are playing a key role in this change by mentoring the new teachers and driving forward the introduction of a mathematics curriculum that emphasises the development of pupils' reasoning.
- As a result of leaders' actions, the work of current pupils shows that they are making good progress in developing their mathematical knowledge, understanding and skills. In Year 6, for example, pupils' calculation skills show a high degree of fluency and most cope well with solving multi-step problems. The most able can solve problems in different number bases, such as binary. Pupils are comfortable articulating the reasoning behind their work. In addition, pupils in Year 6 have regular sessions taught by the raising standards in mathematics leader from Chulmleigh Community College, sessions which are developing their skills in data handling effectively.
- The inspection's second line of enquiry was related to the first and concerned the attainment in mathematics of pupils at key stage 1, especially those who were emerging or at the expected standard at the end of the early years foundation stage. In 2017, attainment of these groups of pupils was below the national average. As in key stage 2, leaders have taken decisive action to address this. The work of current pupils shows that they are developing secure understanding of concepts such as place value. In addition, their fundamental mathematical skills, such as rounding or partitioning two-digit numbers, are increasingly secure.

- My third line of enquiry related to the effectiveness of the early years provision, especially in promoting writing. In recent years, the school has had small numbers of pupils in its Reception class, which means that information about outcomes must be interpreted with caution. Nonetheless, what is clear from this information is that children's performance in writing has been a key factor in determining whether or not they attain a good level of development at the end of the early years foundation stage. You have taken successful action to address this issue by ensuring that your combined Reception and Year 1 class is now taught by an early years specialist.
- Most children join the early years at a level of development that is lower than typical for children their age. The work in current children's learning journals shows that most are making good progress in writing. Indeed, some have made rapid progress from being unable to form letters at the start of the year to being able to write simple sentences in the space of one term. Teaching of phonics is effective in supporting these improvements in writing. However, as you recognise, there is still more work to be done for some children to develop the habits of successful learners, such as concentration and taking turns, so that they make the most of these sessions.
- The inspection's final line of enquiry related to the school's use of the Chulmleigh Academy Trust's Year 6 Academy. In Year 6, pupils from Lapford are brought together with the Year 6 cohorts of the other primaries in the trust to be taught alongside each other, partly with the aim of promoting effective transition to secondary school. At the time of the previous inspection, some parents were concerned about this development. The school has worked effectively with parents to explain the thinking behind this innovative approach. The responses to Ofsted's online survey, Parent View, indicate that for the vast majority of parents no concerns remain. All would recommend the school to a prospective parent.
- The pupils in Year 6 that I spoke to during the inspection were very positive about their experiences at the Year 6 Academy. They enjoy working in larger classes of pupils their own age and welcome the opportunity to make new friends. In addition, they are enthusiastic about the opportunities to visit Chulmleigh Community College to study subjects such as science and music. As a result, they feel well prepared to move on to their secondary education.

Next steps for the school

Leaders and those responsible for governance should ensure that:

- recent changes to the teaching of the mathematics curriculum are fully embedded, so that pupils' attainment and progress continue to improve
- children in Reception develop further the habits of successful learners that will allow them to make the most of the teaching they receive.

I am copying this letter to the chair of the board of trustees and the chief executive officer of the multi-academy trust, the regional schools commissioner and the director of children's services for Devon. This letter will be published on the Ofsted website.

Yours sincerely

Stephen Lee
Her Majesty's Inspector

Information about the inspection

At the start of the day, I met with you and the executive headteacher to discuss and agree the key lines of enquiry I would follow up during the rest of the inspection. Together, we visited classes and looked at samples of pupils' work. I talked to pupils during these visits and also met with a group of pupils from Years 2 and 5. We visited the Chulmleigh Academy Trust's Year 6 Academy, where Year 6 pupils from Lapford Community Primary School are educated. I met with the chair of the board of directors and the director responsible for the school. I examined a range of documentation provided by the school, including information relating to safeguarding. In making my judgements I took into account the 17 responses to Parent View, Ofsted's online survey of parental opinion.