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Mr Shaun Watson
Executive Headteacher
St Mary and St Peter's Church of England Primary School
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Dear Mr Watson

Short inspection of St Mary and St Peter's Church of England Primary School

Following my visit to the school on 25 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 November 2013.

Based on the evidence gathered during this short inspection, I have identified some priorities for improvement which I advise the school to address. In light of these priorities, the school's next inspection will be a full section 5 inspection. **There is no change to the school's current overall effectiveness grade of good as a result of this inspection.**

St Mary and St Peter's Church of England Primary is a member of the Three Saints Federation which also includes Shepton Beauchamp Primary, Ilminster. You are the executive headteacher of both schools, and the federation is run by the same governing body. This is a small school with a high proportion of disadvantaged pupils and a few pupils from a Traveller background. You work effectively to interact with pupils and their families. In fact, your work with other professionals and staff, including the parent, family support adviser, education welfare officer and Traveller service adviser is providing effective care for pupils' physical, emotional and mental well-being. Pupils, parents and carers are happy and enjoy positive relationships with you and your staff. However, in their responses to the staff survey, almost half said that they feel that there has not been any discernible improvement or that there has been some decline since the previous inspection.

Pupils are taught in two mixed-age classes. These include a Reception and key stage 1 class and a separate key stage 2 class. Most pupils leave at the end of Year 4 to attend a local middle school. Currently, there are no pupils in Years 5 or 6. During the inspection, we agreed that the school's next steps are to improve teaching, learning and assessment to focus more precisely on teachers knowing what the

pupils know, can do and understand in order to ensure that pupils can make consistently good progress in reading, writing and mathematics. We also agreed that it is imperative to sustain the recent improvements in children's achievement at the end of Reception so that they can get off to a rapid start in their reading, writing and mathematical development.

Since the last inspection, leaders have not checked the quality of teaching precisely enough to bring about sustained improvements in teaching, learning and assessment. As a result, the previous areas for improvement, namely to improve writing and raise achievement for the most able pupils, remain critical areas for development.

Safeguarding is effective.

You and your staff are diligent in safeguarding pupils. Mandatory procedures and checks on staff before they are employed are robust and well organised. Training for staff and governors is up to date and contributes to a strong culture of safeguarding. This is because staff know their duties and responsibilities and take rapid action when needed to protect pupils. You work closely with other professionals and external agencies to provide effective intervention and support for vulnerable pupils. You play a critical role in checking and challenging other authorities to ensure that pupils are kept safe.

Pupils said that they feel safe. They are fully aware of what to do to stay safe in different situations, for example when using the internet. They understand the need to protect personal information including passwords. Pupils also know about fire safety and the school's processes for evacuating the building. Pupils socialise well in this small school and are happy. They have no concerns about bullying or anti-social behaviour and trust staff to deal with the few incidents when they occur.

Inspection findings

- My first line of enquiry evaluated how well leaders ensure that effective teaching is supporting and challenging pupils to make strong progress in reading, writing and mathematics. You hold termly meetings with teachers to check pupils' progress and have introduced systems to assess pupils, such as through the school's chosen reading scheme. You also work with other primary schools through the Crewkerne and Ilminster schools collaborative community learning partnership (CLP) to moderate pupils' achievement. However, leaders do not assess pupils' work with sufficient depth or rigour, which leads to some overly generous assessments. This slows the identification of weaknesses and, as a result, you and other leaders are not acting quickly enough to intervene when some pupils start to fall behind. This means that the most able pupils are not rapidly identified and supported effectively to reach the highest standards of which they are capable.
- Teachers' assessments do not accurately identify what pupils need to do next to improve, especially in reading and writing. Assessment notes and records are often vague or descriptive. They do not pinpoint what pupils know, understand and can do with enough precision. As a result, teachers do not adapt and moderate their plans well enough to have consistent impact on pupils' achievement.

- Leaders do not evaluate the impact of some key strategies, such as those funded through the pupil premium grant, well enough. Leaders can explain the types of additional activities that disadvantaged pupils receive but do not closely check or analyse the benefits of these. As a consequence, too many of the disadvantaged pupils are not being effectively targeted for the support they need to catch up quickly. This reduces the potential for the funding to have a positive and lasting impact on pupils' achievement.
- Teachers do not regularly plan high-quality activities across the curriculum to deepen pupils' understanding, skills and knowledge in writing and mathematics. As a result, pupils are not consistently strong in composing, structuring or publishing high-quality pieces of writing as authors with a clear intent or purpose. This is also linked to the pupils' limited vocabulary and understanding of language and to reading not being strongly promoted.
- Similarly, teachers do not plan consistently well to enrich and deepen pupils' mathematical reasoning and understanding through other subjects. Key concepts and areas of study including time, measures, statistics and shape are not linked meaningfully to learning across the curriculum. Consequently, pupils seldom use and apply what they have learned and or what they know about mathematics in different, interesting and real-life situations.
- We agreed that the second line of enquiry was to evaluate the effectiveness of the school's approach to teaching reading and phonics. There has been recent improvement in the Year 1 phonics screening check and Year 2 retakes results in 2017. You ensure that phonics is taught every day. However, there are still key weaknesses in the phonics strategy that are holding some pupils back. In particular, pupils are not provided with the right books and texts to match their phonics knowledge. This factor applies to the most able pupils who are finding some books lack challenge to build rapidly on their phonics skills and knowledge.
- The teaching of phonics does not take into account the different starting points of Reception pupils. The pupils with the weakest phonic knowledge do not receive high-quality support. Consequently, their progress slows.
- Once pupils have gained an understanding of phonics so that they are not overtly reliant on using letters and sounds to read words, some pupils still lack speed and fluency in reading. This holds them back, especially the most able, as they do not develop secure comprehension, inference and deduction skills in order to understand what they are reading.
- Some pupils, particularly those who need to catch up, are not developing a love of reading. Staff do not check that home-school reading records are well maintained, including for some of the most vulnerable pupils. There is not a strong culture of reading in the school, and when I was listening to some pupils read they lacked motivation or inspiration, even telling me, 'Books are boring!'
- My third key line of enquiry considered how effectively the school's teaching and provision in the early years prepares the children for key stage 1. Assessment information, including on-entry baseline testing, is accurate. However, this is not used well enough to modify the environment or otherwise alter learning activities to meet the children's ongoing needs, including stretching and challenging the

most able pupils.

- The environment is well resourced and orderly but it is not arranged to provide sufficient focus on giving children a rapid start, especially in literacy. Leaders' analysis shows that reading and writing are perennially the biggest areas of weakness for the children. However, early years practice, including the use of resources and provision does not reflect this area as an urgent priority. Children do not often show curiosity in books or want to start reading or writing independently or with interest. As a result, they are not getting off to a flying start to be well prepared for key stage 1 and beyond.

Next steps for the school

Leaders and those responsible for governance should ensure that:

- teachers use assessment information effectively to ensure that pupils' next steps in reading, writing and mathematics are well matched to their needs, including for the most able pupils
- an effective approach to phonics and a strong culture for reading motivate pupils and raise achievement
- teachers use the full range of subjects to deepen pupils' mathematical knowledge and to enable pupils to compose high-quality writing.

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

Stewart Gale
Her Majesty's Inspector

Information about the inspection

We agreed the timetable and activities for the inspection. I worked extensively with you, including sampling a range of pupils' work and checking this against the school's assessment and tracking system. I scrutinised safeguarding records and we discussed a wide range of related matters, including staff recruitment, training and vetting arrangements. I spoke to pupils, staff and parents about their views of safeguarding. I evaluated evidence that shows how you work with other agencies to keep children safe. Together, we visited both classes in the school. I met with representatives of the governing body and reviewed school documents, including the school's self-evaluation summary and records of governors' visits. I took full account of the 10 responses on Parent View and spoke with parents and reviewed the free-texts received through the inspection. I also spoke with pupils throughout inspection

activities and during breaktime.