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Mrs Jill Rowe
Executive Principal
Somersfords' Walter Powell Church of England Academy
Dauntsey Road
Great Somerford
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SN15 5HS

Dear Mrs Rowe

Short inspection of Somersfords' Walter Powell Church of England Academy

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 your predecessor school was judged to be good in May 2012.

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.**

The school converted to an academy in 2015 and became part of the Diocese of Bristol Academies Trust. You have made good use of the widened expertise this has given you, to clarify and strengthen leadership roles within your school. Very recently, you have extended the age range of the school by bringing the Walter Powell Pre-school under your leadership. You and pre-school leaders are now working to develop improved continuity of learning for children from the age of two to 11 years.

You work closely with other leaders of the trust and the head of school. Currently, you are purposefully focusing on developing the quality of teaching to hasten pupils' progress. You ensure that within the mixed-age classes, all pupils have their full entitlement to an age-appropriate curriculum. The good impact of this can be seen particularly in the high quality of pupils' learning in science. Pupils and parents and carers speak enthusiastically about the practical hands-on learning, which is a core part of the school's approach to the curriculum.

Pupils behave well and work hard. They enjoy coming to school and do so regularly. The above-average rate of pupils' attendance over the previous year shows that you

have been successful in your efforts to gain the support of the community to improve attendance.

Governors are skilled and experienced. They are knowledgeable about the school's priorities and closely monitor the actions the school is taking to bring about improvement. Governors are striving to set ambitious targets for pupils' achievement, but currently they do not have sufficiently robust information about pupils' progress to do this reliably.

You have rightly identified that the school's priorities are to continue to promote the progress of all pupils, particularly in mathematics and writing. Equally, you recognise that vulnerable pupils, particularly those who are disadvantaged, are not yet making strong enough progress. You are continuing to develop the quality of teaching, with the aim of challenging the most able pupils to reach the standards in their work of which they are capable. Some initiatives to tackle these priorities are still to embed and be evaluated for their effectiveness. However, across the school, pupils make good progress in reading. You encourage pupils to develop the breadth of their reading experience and have developed the school library as a bright and inviting place.

Safeguarding is effective.

Leaders and staff know the community well and work closely with families to promote pupils' welfare. Policies that relate to safeguarding are robust and there are now stronger systems for recording concerns that a pupil may be at risk. The school's procedures are fit for purpose.

Staff are regularly trained and understand their responsibility to be vigilant. In addition to statutory training, leaders keep safeguarding high on the agenda of staff development through the new 'What if?' meetings. These help staff to reflect on possible risks and ensure that there is a clear and consistent approach to tackling them.

Leaders carry out all appropriate checks to ensure that adults are safe to work with pupils. Administrative staff are vigilant in monitoring who enters the building and checking the identity of visitors. Governors are knowledgeable about safeguarding and visit regularly to check on the effectiveness of the school's health and safety systems. Leaders have responded to the recommendations in a recent audit of the school's safeguarding procedures and are rightly keeping these under review.

Parents are confident that their children are safe in school. Pupils say that staff listen to them if they have a problem and that pupils of different ages play well together. As one pupil said, 'There is definitely no bullying here.' Pupils are taught about staying safe on the internet and know not to share personal information.

Inspection findings

- Leaders and teachers meet regularly to review pupils' learning and progress. They use these meetings to plan further support if there is a risk that pupils are falling behind. Pupils' workbooks show that progress is being made. However, the rate of progress is variable in aspects of writing and mathematics. The actions that leaders are taking to overcome this are, in some cases, very new. Teachers' expectations of what some pupils could be expected to achieve are not yet consistently high enough.
- Routinely, leaders' judgements of good progress take account of in-year progress. For pupils in key stage 2, there is not sufficient recognition of their previous key stage 1 level of attainment to measure progress over a longer period. As a result, leaders are not sufficiently clear about what would equate to good progress over time for individual pupils, for example the most able. This also limits governors' ability to set realistic and ambitious targets for pupils' progress. Senior leaders have recently sharpened their approach to planning for school improvement. However, securing high-quality self-evaluation is still 'work in progress'.
- Teachers benefit from increased opportunities to work with others across the federation and trust. They meet regularly to review samples of pupils' work and this has strengthened the consistency of teachers' assessment. However, currently, teachers do not always assess the gaps in pupils' skills and knowledge precisely enough to identify the support needed and the best way to help the pupil catch up. This is reducing the impact of the high-quality interventions that the school offers, for example to hasten the progress of disadvantaged pupils. Leaders recognise that further improvement to this aspect of the school's work is needed so that all pupils, including those who are disadvantaged, make consistently good progress.
- You have very recently responded to the need to improve the teaching of writing by implementing a new programme of work. Teachers now plan more consistently to develop pupils' skills in writing for different purposes. Pupils write frequently and at length across the curriculum and in 'quick writes'. This is developing pupils' interest in, and stamina for, writing. They plan their writing thoughtfully and enthusiastically.
- In lessons seen and in workbooks, pupils are gaining knowledge of different forms of writing. Some of the most able pupils, however, are not extending their ideas and vocabulary to deepen the quality of their writing. Pupils who are still striving to develop the skills expected for their age have gaps in using punctuation and spelling. Because the new way of planning only began this term, it is not yet possible to evaluate fully whether these gaps in pupils' knowledge are being overcome and progress improved.
- Leaders ensure that pupils in key stage 2 have strong and secure skills in arithmetic. Pupils work swiftly and accurately, setting their work out neatly. Leaders have rightly identified, however, that the opportunities that pupils have to apply their mathematical skills need to be deeper and more challenging.
- Leaders have tackled this area for improvement through developing the role of

the leader for mathematics. There are improved resources for teachers to plan their mathematics lessons. Teachers discuss pupils' learning with them to check that they understand the reasoning behind the work they are tackling. Currently, however, the work in pupils' books shows that pupils are not securely demonstrating the depth of thinking expected for their age. For example, older pupils are not showing that they can express their explanations in accurate mathematical language. Your recent monitoring with governors has confirmed that there is more work to do to develop the teaching of this aspect of mathematics.

Next steps for the school

Leaders and those responsible for governance should ensure that:

- the school's self-evaluation is further sharpened so that realistic and ambitious targets can be set for pupils' achievement
- the progress of pupils, including those who are disadvantaged, is hastened by teachers more precisely identifying and overcoming gaps in pupils' understanding
- the teaching of mathematics securely develops pupils' mathematical reasoning
- the new programme for teaching writing is embedded and evaluated to ensure that the intended improvements to pupils' progress are brought about quickly.

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

Yours sincerely

Wendy Marriott
Ofsted Inspector

Information about the inspection

During the inspection, I met with you, the deputy principal and the head of school and discussed the progress pupils are making. I briefly observed pupils' learning in all classes, including the pre-school. Together with the head of school, I reviewed pupils' workbooks in a range of subjects, including English and mathematics.

I met with a group of governors and a trustee of the trust. I also had a discussion with the trust's school improvement adviser. I reviewed the school's self-evaluation and school development plan. I read documentation, including that in relation to safeguarding and governance.

I met with a group of older pupils to hear about their experiences of school and

talked to others in the playground. I also took account of the views of the nine pupils who had completed the pupil questionnaire. I met with parents at the start of the day and used the information from the online questionnaire, Parent View. I took account of the nine responses from staff to the staff questionnaire.