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Tiffany Doughty Davis
Head of School
Huish Episcopi Primary School
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Dear Mrs Doughty Davis

Short inspection of Huish Episcopi Primary School

Following my visit to the school on 22 February 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 predecessor school was judged to be good in September 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.**

There have been several changes to leadership arrangements and structures over recent months which have been unsettling for the school. In the short time you have been in post you have steadily gained the confidence of the school community. All staff who responded to the online survey said they were proud to work at the school. They are confident that leaders are ensuring that they are motivated and effective.

On appointment, you quickly identified some areas for immediate improvement. For example, you re-organised the curriculum to ensure that pupils receive regular learning experiences in a range of subjects. You made changes to the school daily routine to make the most of the learning time available. You also recognised the strengths that existed in the school. Relationships around the school are strong and pupils relate well to one another and to adults. Pupils' behaviour is good and they are respectful and polite.

The previous inspection recommended that learning activities should provide more challenge for pupils. However, you are aware that expectations are not consistently high enough across the school. Teachers have not received sufficient high-quality professional development to enable them to assess pupils' understanding accurately and to plan challenging work for pupils. In addition, subject leaders do not

consistently check that pupils are making good progress. As a result, some pupils, particularly boys and the most able pupils, do not make the progress they should. For example, no pupils achieved higher standards in mathematics and no boys reached higher standards in reading in 2017.

Safeguarding is effective.

The culture of safeguarding is secure. Leaders have ensured that all safeguarding arrangements are fit for purpose. Governors fulfil their roles well by ensuring that safeguarding checks are completed. Staff are well-informed and vigilant. Safeguarding training is wide and varied. Systems to record concerns and those to recruit staff are robust. A number of external agencies are communicated with to ensure that pupils and their families receive the support they need if at risk.

Inspection findings

- During my visit, we looked together at some particular lines of enquiry. The first was to investigate why fewer children than the national average reach a good level of development by the end of their time in Reception. This has been the case for the past two years. Some children join the school during the school year and their previous experiences of learning vary widely.
- We looked carefully at the expectations in the Reception class. Children are happy and busy. They are secure and enjoy their time in school. However, expectations are not high enough. Too few children learn skills that are appropriate for their age and too few exceed the expected standard by the time they leave the Reception Year. This is particularly the case for writing and mathematics.
- We also explored the progress that boys make across the school in reading. This is because although outcomes for phonics in key stage 1 are above national averages, progress in reading, particularly for boys, is weaker.
- Although pupils are encouraged to read often, some do not read widely and some have a limited understanding of the books they read. Teachers do not consistently check the range of books being read and encourage pupils, particularly boys, to read different authors or different types of books.
- Pupils do not have a good grasp of the skills they need to read well. Subject leaders do not have a framework in place to assess and check the progress that pupils are making across the school. Therefore, weaknesses are not being identified and put right.
- Finally, we looked at the challenge being provided for pupils, particularly in mathematics. No pupils have achieved higher standards in mathematics over the past two years, by the end of Year 6. Pupils' workbooks and our visits to see learning in mathematics showed that teachers do not consistently plan for the specific learning needs for pupils. Teachers do not have the subject knowledge they need to provide lessons that match learning needs.
- Some pupils have misconceptions that are not identified and supported in lessons. Others are not given additional challenges to keep them interested in

mathematics. As a result, pupils do not make the progress they should and the most able pupils do not reach higher standards.

Next steps for the school

Leaders and those responsible for governance should ensure that:

- there is a clear and sustained focus on improving the quality of teaching, learning and assessment so that expectations across the school are consistently high
- subject leaders rigorously check and improve the progress that pupils make
- staff receive high-quality professional development that supports their knowledge and understanding of the subjects they teach
- teachers plan learning, particularly in mathematics, that builds on what pupils know, understand and can do and therefore matches the learning needs of pupils
- learning activities are challenging enough to ensure that pupils, particularly the most able, make at least good progress in a range of subjects
- pupils, particularly boys, read widely and with comprehension that is appropriate for their age
- children make at least good progress from their starting points in the Reception class, particularly in writing and in mathematics.

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

Yours sincerely

Tonwen Empson
Her Majesty's Inspector

Information about the inspection

During the inspection visits were made with the head of school to see learning across the school. Together, we looked at a range of pupils' workbooks. I spoke to staff and pupils informally. I met with the trust's chief education officer, who is also the executive principal. I spoke on the telephone to an improvement adviser who supports school improvement. I had a meeting with the chair of the governing body and spoke to the chair of the trustees for The Levels Academy Trust.

I scrutinised key school documents including those to do with safeguarding, the school improvement plan and the school's self-evaluation document. I looked at recruitment procedures, including the single central record.

I took into account the views gathered from parents at the start of the day and the 39 responses to Ofsted's online questionnaire, Parent View. I also took account of the 23 responses from staff to an online staff survey.