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Mrs Katy Bartlett
Headteacher
St Martin's East Woodhay Church of England Voluntary Aided Primary School
East End
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Dear Mrs Bartlett

**Short inspection of St Martin's East Woodhay Church of England Voluntary Aided Primary School**

Following my visit to the school on 13 March 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 May 2014.

**This school continues to be good.**

Leaders have maintained the good quality of education in the school since the last inspection against a backdrop of significant staffing changes for a small school. The school was without a permanent headteacher for all of the last school year. You joined the school in September 2017, and two more new senior leaders, the deputy headteacher and inclusion manager, took up post in January 2018. Half of the staff who responded to Ofsted's online survey were not at the school at the last inspection. There have also been changes within the governing body, including a new chair, since the last inspection.

The vast majority of parents and carers are really pleased with the school and rightly so. They appreciate the caring and nurturing atmosphere of a small village school and feel that their children are happy and taught well, and make good progress. A few voiced concerns about recent changes to the way things are done, but these are more than outweighed by overwhelmingly positive feedback from others. Pupils are equally positive about St Martin's. Those I spoke to felt that you are fitting in well. It is clear that the new school values of respect, friendship, courage and creativity are helping them to reflect with maturity on the positive attitudes and attributes they need for life.

Over the last three years, the proportion of children reaching a good level of development by the end of Reception Year has consistently been above average. Outcomes at the expected standard in reading, writing and mathematics at age seven and age 11 are usually close to national figures. The proportions of pupils

reaching a higher standard in reading, something the school was asked to improve following the last inspection, are consistently above average at ages seven and 11.

Last summer term, the interim headteacher and local authority adviser identified the need to pick up the pace on improving teaching further, the other aspect the inspector in 2014 asked the school to develop. You hit the ground running on this as soon as you took up post last September. You drew on your experience and careful analysis to pinpoint exactly which aspects of teaching and assessment needed to improve. A mix of whole-staff training, individual support from you, local authority advisers and, more recently, the new deputy headteacher, has brought about significant improvements in teaching and learning since September. Part of the recipe for success has been the way you have paced the support and challenge to ensure that staff are fully on board.

Governance has also strengthened considerably over the last year. Governors are honest that finding things were not as good as they thought last year was a wake-up call for them. They value the detailed reports they get from you about the school's work, but make sure they check what you are saying for themselves or through external validation.

You are ambitious for the school and the pupils, and know that they could do even better, given their starting points. Your monitoring is keeping a careful eye on those pupils in all year groups who are not reaching the expected level for their age in all three of reading, writing and mathematics. You see that as the precursor of future success.

This term, you have turned your attention to the wider curriculum, which you know needs revamping to be fully fit for purpose. You have joined forces with a small group of leaders from similar schools and advisers from the local authority, and are making good headway with your plans to have the new curriculum in place for the beginning of the next school year. To start with, it has been you leading this work, but plans are in place to ensure that all teachers, as subject leaders, are involved in the next phases. This is part of the longer term plan to develop leadership beyond the senior team, first in English and mathematics, and then in other subjects.

## Safeguarding is effective

One of your first priorities has been to review safeguarding arrangements carefully to be confident that they are fit for purpose and to make sure that everyone is of the mind 'it could happen here'. Policies, procedures and staff training are up to date and take account of the most recent guidance on a range of matters. Access to the school site and buildings has, rightly, been tightened. While a few parents question the need for some of the changes you have made, they are unanimous, as are staff, that pupils are safe at the school. Virtually all pupils responding to the online survey feel safe, and confident that they can talk to an adult at school if anything is worrying them. Pupils I spoke to appreciate the way staff talk through problems to help them sort things out.

Staff know each pupil incredibly well. Leaders know which pupils, for whatever reasons, need particular care and support. They make sure that staff know whom they need to keep a careful eye on and have the right training to help them understand pupils' particular needs. Referrals to other agencies are rare, which means that most staff have limited experience of safeguarding cases. You are addressing this by posing real-life scenarios for discussion at staff meetings to ensure that they know when and how to raise concerns. In turn, the governor responsible for safeguarding, who because of her professional background knows the right questions to ask, challenges you so that she can assure her fellow governors that systems and processes are secure.

## Inspection findings

- During the inspection, as well as looking at the effectiveness of safeguarding arrangements, I looked closely with you at particular aspects of the school's work, including: whether learning is pitched at the right level for pupils, particularly in writing and mathematics; the achievement of the most able pupils; the quality of the school's curriculum; and the effectiveness of middle leaders in driving further improvements.
- The proportions of seven- and 11-year-old pupils reaching the expected standards in writing and mathematics have not been as consistently strong as in reading over the last two years. This is because the leadership and staffing changes hindered some of the school's work to build on the strengths in teaching found at the last inspection. As a result, staff were not fully familiar with the higher expectations of the new national curriculum. The current pitch of work in the pupils' books we sampled confirms that leaders' work this year to make sure that staff understand what pupils should be able to do in each year group is paying dividends. The school's most recent data shows that the new systems for keeping track of pupils' progress were already starting to have a positive impact on attainment by the end of the autumn term. Any gaps in pupils' learning are being picked up and tackled in a timely fashion.
- Another consequence of the work to improve teaching stalling has been that the proportions of pupils reaching the higher standards in writing and mathematics have not been as strong as in reading, particularly at age 11. The work to improve teaching and assessment this year has benefited the most able pupils. Work in their books shows an appropriate level of challenge and the proportions achieving the higher levels in each cohort are improving.
- Other subjects are delivered through a three-year cycle of topics. Staff draw on a range of published schemes alongside the national curriculum to make sure that individually they cover all the subjects at an appropriate level for the pupils in their class. However, leaders recognise the need for greater oversight in the light of the particular challenges of classes spanning different year groups and, in one case, two key stages. Work is well under way to develop a new curriculum that covers content at the right level for different year groups and develops pupils' skills effectively over time. There is, however, more work to be done to ensure that this is ready for implementation in the next school year.
- The leaders for English and mathematics currently act as the in-house experts in

their subject, being a point of reference for, and offering advice to, other staff. During the time of staffing turnover, they had limited opportunities to take the lead in identifying what needs to improve, draw up action plans and see them through. You appreciate that responsibility for bringing about improvement cannot be vested just in the headteacher, even in a small school. Now that staffing is more stable, you plan to develop subject leaders' roles.

## Next steps for the school

Leaders and those responsible for governance should ensure that:

- the school's new curriculum gives pupils opportunities to achieve well in a range of subjects
- the role of middle leaders is strengthened so that they can contribute more to whole-school improvements.

I am copying this letter to the chair of the governing body, the director of education for the Diocese of Winchester, the regional schools commissioner and the director of children's services for Hampshire. This letter will be published on the Ofsted website.

Yours sincerely

Alison Bradley
**Her Majesty's Inspector**

## Information about the inspection

I met with you and your deputy headteacher, the leaders for English and mathematics, pupils, governors, and a representative from the local authority. You and I visited each class to see pupils and teachers at work. With the deputy headteacher, we sampled pupils' books to check how challenging their English and mathematics work is, and the different topics and subjects they learn about. I took account of 45 responses to Ofsted's online questionnaire, Parent View, including 30 free-text comments, as well as speaking to a number of parents at the beginning of the school day. I also considered 89 responses from pupils and 19 from staff to their online surveys. I analysed a range of school documentation, including: information about the curriculum and pupils' achievement; records of your checks on teaching and learning; and safeguarding checks, policies and procedures. We discussed your own assessment of the school's effectiveness and your plans for further improvement.