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Mrs Jackie Rundle  
Holbeton School  
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Dear Mrs Rundle

### **Short inspection of Holbeton School**

Following my visit to the school on 8 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 July 2014.

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.**

Since your appointment as headteacher in April 2017, you have worked tirelessly to engage with the community. This was an area for improvement at the last inspection. On arrival at the school, you inherited a significant decline in numbers of pupils, from 80-plus to just over 30 pupils. Parents and carers recognise your enthusiasm and commitment and are keen to share their support for your work. This was apparent when I met with parents before school on the day of the inspection and within the comments on Ofsted's online survey, Parent View. The following statement is typical of many: 'Holbeton Primary School under the leadership of Mrs Jackie Rundle has become a place of real excellence and safe learning, where each child is valued, cherished and taught with great care and respect.'

You have been ably supported by the executive primary principal of the Westcountry Schools Trust (WeST). Together, you have made an accurate evaluation of the strengths and weaknesses of the school. You have a measured plan in place to secure improvements. Currently, you are leader of both literacy and numeracy in the school and are very aware of the need for more rapid progress in these subjects. You have appointed a leader of the foundation stage to ensure that children in Reception have a good start to their education. It is very early days since this leader took up post, so it is too soon to be able to check on the impact she has

made.

### **Safeguarding is effective.**

You have created a culture where assessing risk is the norm. For example, you carefully monitor the playground area situated at the top of steep steps. The personal safety and well-being of pupils are secure. The checks undertaken on staff, visitors and recruitment are stringent. Secure processes are in place for monitoring and recording any safeguarding concerns. Staff are trained in how to keep pupils safe from abuse, sexual exploitation, and from the influence of radical or extreme views. Staff work sensitively with parents and external agencies to monitor and support any vulnerable pupils.

### **Inspection findings**

- Initially, I discussed with you and the governors the capacity within leadership. The school is vulnerable because of the low numbers and you are hoping to become part of the academy trust that is supporting the school so well. However, your strong governing body is astute and has alternative plans ready, either for joining the trust or for staying as a mainstream school. Careful consideration of all scenarios and prudent financial planning have taken place to make sure the school can continue with the current leadership in place. Numbers are now starting to increase because of successful communication and the school's improved reputation.
- Next, we looked at the literacy teaching that is in place. Your expertise is in key stage 1 and you have made sure that phonics teaching in Years 1 and 2 prepares pupils well for reading and writing. Outcomes in phonics are above the national average with 100% of pupils being successful in both years. I listened to pupils read well in both key stages and they are fluent. However, pupils are less so in their grasp of inference. Pupils are not as proficient in their writing, especially at key stage 2. There has been a drive to improve handwriting but, too often, pupils are making spelling mistakes in the exercises, so are compounding errors. Similarly, pupils present work in key stage 2 with basic mistakes in their writing, such as in the placement of capital letters and full stops. This lack of attention to detail and proofreading means that they do not develop more correct and sophisticated punctuation and grammar. Planning ensures that pupils acquire skills in English but not that they achieve deeper understanding. Hence, pupils, particularly the most able and the most able disadvantaged pupils, are not reaching the higher levels of which they are capable.
- Children in Reception can count fluently up to 20. They use resources independently to aid them in this. Sometimes, teaching does not challenge them or take them rapidly to the next level of mathematics, even though they are ready to move on. Pupils in key stage 1 are working at age-related expectations and the most able are stretched. The picture is not the same in key stage 2. Too often, pupils are set similar work regardless of age and ability differences. The variation in work planned is not focused enough on pupils' individual needs. As a result, too many pupils, especially the most able and most able disadvantaged, are not making progress that reflects their potential. You were aware of this and

put support in place in the autumn term. However, since then, without this support, pupils have made less progress.

- Finally, we discussed the attendance of pupils, as this had been below the national average, though persistent absence had been above. Your effective communication with parents has had an impact in this area. Overall attendance and persistent absence are now in line with the national average.

### **Next steps for the school**

Leaders and those responsible for governance should ensure that:

- pupils' progress increases so that by the end of each key stage, including the early years foundation stage, their achievement reflects their potential and is at least in line with national expectations
- the most able, including those who are disadvantaged, are provided with challenge to deepen their thinking, write at greater depth and reason more proficiently in mathematics
- pupils' gains in knowledge, understanding and skills for spelling, grammar and punctuation are checked more precisely
- pupils' writing demonstrates grammatical and technical accuracy in every subject.

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

Yours sincerely

Kathy Maddocks  
**Her Majesty's Inspector**

### **Information about the inspection**

During the inspection, I met with you, the executive primary principal, the chair and a group of governors, staff and pupils. I had a telephone call with the chief executive officer of WeST. I visited lessons in both classes in the school, focusing on mathematics and writing. I looked at the quality of work in pupils' exercise books. I considered documentary evidence relating to the impact of the school's work, including safeguarding. I took into account 26 responses to the Ofsted online survey, Parent View, and 22 comments written by parents, plus the 19 responses from pupils and seven from staff, to the Ofsted online survey.