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Dear Ms Howard

Short inspection of Longney Church of England Primary Academy

Following my visit to the school on 21 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 your predecessor school was judged to be good in July 2013.

This school continues to be good.

The leadership team has maintained the good quality of education in the school since the last inspection. Together with governors and other staff, you have ensured that the school continues to prioritise the right areas for pupils to succeed. Since the school joined the Diocese of Gloucester Academies Trust (DGAT) in November 2015, there has been a high turnover of staff in this small school. However, you have managed this effectively through well-targeted professional development and training to keep staff 'upskilled', knowledgeable and keen to improve. You take effective action to maintain high professional standards in the quality of teaching, learning and assessment, including quickly tackling weaknesses when these are identified.

You have ensured that the quality of education and curriculum inspires the pupils. For example, they enjoy learning outdoors in a range of different situations and settings. Together with other teachers, you are keen to test and modify teaching approaches to meet pupils' needs, such as daily active mathematics sessions. Pupils enjoy learning together and sharing time in lessons to help, support and challenge each other. Pupils are strongly encouraged to be reflective and evaluate their own learning. This helps them to gain confidence and independence in their work.

Since the previous inspection, you have successfully improved the quality of teaching and leadership, although you recognise that this is continually under review because of changes to staff over time. Leaders check the quality of teaching and have strong systems in place for holding others to account. These work well and ensure that you and your team know the pupils well. This enables you to provide timely and appropriate support for them. However, some leaders'

monitoring, as well as their planned actions, is not always focused well enough. For example, leaders' milestones or 'success criteria' for raising pupils' achievement lack precision. This slows the progress of some, including the most able pupils. Furthermore, it makes it more difficult for governors and trustees to measure improvements or to hold you clearly to account in meeting targets or agreed expectations.

During the inspection, evidence showed that the majority of parents endorse your work and recognise the improvements taking place in the school. Most comments through Ofsted's free-text service were positive, including: 'Our children are extremely happy at Longney. They are working on-target academically and are well supported in all aspects of their learning by the teaching staff'; and, 'Longney is a fantastic school and our children are very happy. Staff are supportive, inclusive and friendly.' You have provided additional support for parents, for example mathematics workshops and 'counting sleep' to provide insight into the importance of sleep for mental and emotional development. However, a significant minority of parents expressed some concerns about communication or relationships with leaders, especially about consistency in behaviour management. Together with governors and the chief executive officer of DGAT, you agree that further work is needed to investigate the reasons for this and strive to improve partnership working with a core group of parents.

Safeguarding is effective.

You ensure that safeguarding arrangements are fit for purpose. Leaders, including governors, check that staff are knowledgeable and appropriately trained to look after pupils. As a result, staff know how to refer concerns and respond to pupils in relation to child protection matters. Pre-employment vetting is robust and effectively coordinated to ensure that staff are checked and cleared to work with pupils. Governors check that safeguarding procedures are appropriately completed and audited. For example, governors have ensured that procedures for first aid training, risk assessments, supervision of pupils and site security are clearly understood and fully implemented. These were checked extensively during this inspection.

Pupils say they feel safe. They have a good understanding of how to stay safe, for example when working online, and can speak confidently about different risks and hazards and how to mitigate these. They could also explain what to do in the event of a fire and knew the evacuation procedures well. Pupils also know what bullying is and understand the need to be tolerant, explaining this through their experiences of a recent 'odd-socks day'. They feel that bullying does not really happen at Longney. However, they trust staff to help and intervene should it occur. You monitor pupils' behaviour and make referrals to gain emotional and mental support for them as needed. This includes through the deployment of the school counsellor, which pupils and parents appreciate.

Inspection findings

- My first line of enquiry evaluated the extent to which the most able pupils are being supported and challenged to reach the higher standards. This is because,

with the exception of reading at key stage 2, school results were below the national figures for those attaining 'greater depth' in key stages 1 and 2. You had already recognised this and, as a result, are taking effective steps to raise the achievement of higher attaining pupils. The revised strategies being implemented on a daily basis, in both mathematics and writing, are strongly supporting the most able pupils in their learning. As a result, the majority of year groups are seeing much higher proportions of pupils working at greater depth.

- The most able pupils are enjoying the challenges being presented to them. They told me how expectations of them have increased, especially this year. They like the additional tasks and challenges to stretch them. For example, pupils know how to assess and improve their own work through collaboration with the class teacher. This is helping them to make strong progress. Workbooks also confirm that your targeted priority areas are accurate. For example, you have recognised that pupils are not yet consistently writing with the complexity required in terms of range of vocabulary, sentence length and variation.
- The second line of enquiry explored how well pupils are being identified and supported to make rapid progress in mathematics, especially prior middle-attaining pupils, and girls. Pupils' workbooks now show that there is no ongoing gender difference in mathematics. Mathematics results at the end of key stage 2 in 2017 were affected by previous weaknesses in assessment. These have been addressed. The school's approach to improving mathematics is working well. You are passionate about improving mathematics, not only taking the lead in school, but across a cluster of local primary schools. Your action research, for example on developing mastery, is ensuring that pupils are deepening their knowledge of mathematics and enjoying thinking and reasoning in a variety of contexts.
- Pupils, are able to explain their mathematical thinking and reasoning. For example, pupils in Year 6 show a strong understanding of how fractions, decimals and percentages are related. They also show ways that they are beginning to tackle, and be challenged by, more complex problems, including algebraic equations. However, as with writing, there is a continuing need to keep this focus on the most able pupils to ensure that they can reach the standards of which they are capable.
- My third line of enquiry considered how well pupils are being supported to learn phonics, and how they apply this in order to read and write well by the end of key stage 1. This is because the 2017 Year 1 phonics screening check results were below the national average. You ensure that pupils receive daily phonics teaching which is matched to their needs. This includes those who need extra help to catch up. You ensure that teachers check pupils' knowledge and understanding, and use assessments well to plan pupils' next steps. Consequently, pupils are currently making good progress towards meeting the Year 1 standards.
- You have also taken direct action to intervene and address previous weaknesses in teaching in key stage 1. The quality of teaching in the Reception class and key stage 1 is now providing a strong platform for pupils. For example, I observed children in Reception, including those who need to catch up, reading and writing towards age-appropriate expectations. They were using and applying sounds with two or three letters to build words and read simple sentences.

Next steps for the school

Leaders and those responsible for governance should ensure that they:

- continue to increase the proportion of pupils reaching the highest standards in writing and mathematics at the end of key stages 1 and 2
- raise the quality of teaching and pupils' achievement through more precise planning, monitoring and evaluation
- improve communication and relationships with all parents so that pupils and families feel well supported and listened to.

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

Yours sincerely

Stewart Gale
Her Majesty's Inspector

Information about the inspection

I worked extensively with you, including sampling a range of pupils' mathematics books and written work. I also talked with pupils during lessons and observed children reading and writing in the Reception Year. I scrutinised safeguarding records and we discussed a wide range of related matters, including staff recruitment, training and vetting arrangements. I also reviewed processes and systems in relation to pupils' play and safety on the playground. I spoke with pupils and staff about their views of safeguarding.

Together, we visited all 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 57 responses on Parent View as well as reviewing the free-text comments received through the inspection. I also took into consideration additional views provided by parents during confidential telephone calls and via a letter. I had a discussion with the local authority adviser and read her recent visit notes.