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Mrs Evie Semmens and Miss Tracey Cleverly
Head of Academy and Executive Headteacher
Ellacombe Church of England Primary School Academy
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Dear Mrs Semmens and Miss Cleverly

Short inspection of Ellacombe Church of England Primary School Academy

Following my visit to the school on 10 July 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 February 2014.

This school continues to be good.

The leadership team has maintained the good quality of education in the school since the last inspection.

You and your senior managers are passionate about raising pupils' aspirations and are effective in doing so by modelling the Learning Academy Partnership Trust's ethos that 'Together we Empower Excellence'. You have provided high-quality training for teachers through the academy trust, and this has led to a significant rise in collective leadership across the school. You are well supported by middle leaders, including the special educational needs lead, and mathematics and English leaders. You are currently further strengthening middle leadership through exemplary support from the academy trust in coaching and developing talented, aspiring leaders.

Staff morale in the school is high. Staff who responded to the staff survey, issued during the inspection, agreed that they feel proud to be a member of staff at the school. There is a collective vision which energises staff to do their best for the pupils. This is because staff are trusted to take responsibility for their work, develop their expertise and exercise their professionalism. They feel fully supported by leaders to do this. Nearly all staff who responded to the staff survey stated that leaders support their professional development and promote improvement.

The innovative development of the nurture class, together with its extensive range of pastoral and educational activities, enriches pupils' experiences of learning. Spiritual, moral, social and cultural development is enhanced by an extensive range of visits and residential trips, including through visits to places of interest such as a

mosque and cathedral in Exeter. At the same time, the school's Christian ethos instils in pupils a respect for values such as kindness and honesty. Staff have high expectations of behaviour. As a result, pupils are well mannered and considerate of each other. For example, pupils greeted me with 'good morning' and held doors open for me during the inspection.

You have secured strong provision in the early years. This has led to a positive trend of children achieving a good level of development. Pupils also consistently achieve well and reach the expected standard in the key stage 1 phonics screening check. A high proportion of pupils met the expected standard in 2017. Across the school, pupils are making strong progress in mathematics. This is due to teachers' secure subject knowledge and improvements in the teaching of reasoning and problem solving.

At the time of the last inspection, you were asked to improve attainment and progress in reading so that they at least match those in writing and mathematics by the end of key stage 2. You and your English leader have rightly targeted improving reading as a priority over recent years. Additional resources and a restructuring of the teaching of reading, through increasing the focus on developing pupils' inference skills, have resulted in improved outcomes. Consequently, almost all the current Year 6 pupils are working at the expected standard and over a third are working at the higher standard.

You were also asked to ensure that the progress made by those pupils eligible for additional support through the pupil premium grant is improved. Good teaching and additional support ensure that the majority of disadvantaged pupils, including those most able, are now achieving well. Pupils are working hard to develop their skills. However, sometimes the work planned is not matched closely enough to pupils' abilities. As a result, some pupils do not understand what they have to learn and their learning falters when they wait for further explanations from adults. Pupils make substantial progress when teaching includes regular checking to address pupils' individual needs and is then adapted to overcome any specific barriers to their learning.

Safeguarding is effective.

Leaders, staff and governors have ensured that safeguarding arrangements are fit for purpose. The local governance committee carefully considers serious case reviews and high priority is given to ensuring that pupils are kept safe. The committee has supported you to challenge rigorously the small number of incidents related to bullying. You make sure that all necessary checks are made to confirm that those who work with children are suitable. Training for safeguarding and child protection is regular and comprehensive, enabling staff and governors to discharge their duties fully.

Pupils feel safe. They know what to do if they have any concerns and are confident to share their worries with any member of staff. They are unanimous in their view that they are happy and well cared for at Ellacombe. Pupils, parents and carers regularly refer to the 'family feel' of the school.

Inspection findings

- To check that the school remains good, my first line of enquiry was to ascertain how successfully leaders are improving the uneven progress pupils make in key stage 2. In particular, my enquiry focused on how well teachers use assessment to improve the progress in reading for girls, disadvantaged pupils and pupils who had middle prior attainment.
- Leaders have tackled historical weaknesses in pupils' reading skills. Teachers' improved use of assessment has enabled more rapid and precise identification of pupils' needs. Teachers use their subject knowledge and understanding of the pupils to plan stimulating reading activities. These are tailored to the needs of pupils of different abilities, so they can access and enjoy their learning, regardless of ability.
- In the current key stage 2 classes, pupils' workbooks show that pupils are practising increasingly complex comprehension activities and are achieving well. All teachers are building pupils' stamina for reading and guiding pupils' personal reading. Your chosen approach to focus on using high-quality texts in other subjects is engaging girls more and sparking their enthusiasm for reading. As a result, pupils of all ages are becoming keen and confident readers.
- My second line of enquiry was to explore the impact of leaders' actions to improve the rates of progress for disadvantaged pupils. This was because the disadvantaged pupils' key stage 2 combined results in reading, writing and mathematics in 2017 were below those of non-disadvantaged pupils.
- Your analysis of the performance of all pupils last year prompted a comprehensive review of the arrangements to support the most disadvantaged pupils. Teaching assistants are now better deployed to maximise their skills and therefore the impact they have on pupils' progress has rapidly improved. Programmes to support pupils' individual needs in the nurture class are increasingly personalised and adapted to support pupils' learning in their day-to-day lessons.
- You monitor pupils' progress precisely and continually look for ways to improve the support for disadvantaged pupils. As a result, the majority of disadvantaged pupils are progressing well. On occasion, pupils who are not as able, including disadvantaged pupils and those who have special educational needs (SEN) and/or disabilities are expected to work on the same writing tasks as their most-able peers. As a result, they find that the work set is too hard. This is holding back their achievement, but you are working hard to resolve the issue.
- My third line of enquiry was to evaluate the impact of leaders' actions to improve outcomes in grammar, spelling and punctuation. This was because, in the 2017 key stage 2 test, pupils' outcomes were low, especially for boys and disadvantaged pupils.
- The use of high-quality reading texts has supported pupils' writing. They make good use of the rich vocabulary gained from reading to make their writing come alive. However, pupils' writing is sometimes limited by inaccurate spelling and weak sentence construction. Staff have engaged with training across the trust to

tackle this. Work in books, particularly in upper key stage 2, reflects improvement. More pupils are editing their work to enhance punctuation and grammar or to check their spellings. However, improvements to the quality of pupils' writing are not consistent across all key stage 2 classes, as teachers do not have consistently high expectations.

- My fourth and final line of enquiry was to assess the effectiveness of the school's strategies for addressing persistent absence. Attendance has remained broadly average over time. However, the proportion of pupils who were persistently absent increased to above the national figure in 2017.
- You have implemented a culture of high expectation around attendance, introducing improved communication to parents to highlight the importance of regular attendance. Your family support lead and strong pastoral team have had a positive impact on challenging absence and punctuality. Where the family support team perceives there to be concerns, they act swiftly. They are vigilant in working closely with parents and external agencies to ensure that pupils and their families receive the support they need. You rigorously follow up any issues or concerns you may have. Consequently, your current attendance rates are now improved and rates of persistent absence are below the national average.

Next steps for the school

Leaders and those responsible for governance should ensure that:

- pupils in lower key stage 2 receive the appropriate level of challenge in their learning through higher expectations from teachers
- staff receive the training they need to assess accurately and plan writing activities for pupils with low starting points, including for disadvantaged pupils and those who have SEN and/or disabilities.

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

Yours sincerely

Susan Costello

Ofsted Inspector

Information about the inspection

During the inspection, I met with you, the chief executive officer, subject leaders, the academy trust's mathematics leader and the SEN leader. In addition, I met with two members of your local governance committee and a group of pupils. I met

informally with some parents and spoke with staff and pupils at lunchtime. I also listened to a small group of pupils reading. Together, we observed learning in classes. We examined a sample of pupils' work in their books over time, alongside their progress information. I examined a range of documents, including your self-evaluation, improvement planning and documents relating to pupils' progress and safety. I took account of the 45 responses to Ofsted's online Parent View survey and several written responses from parents. I also considered the 49 responses to the online staff survey.