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Miss Cathie Lampert and Mrs Sue Jones
Co-headteachers
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Dear Miss Lampert and Mrs Jones

Short inspection of St Mary's Church of England Primary School

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.

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 the previous inspection, the school has grown in size and popularity and you have developed a shared model of headship. You are now building a team of middle leaders to take account of the need to continue to raise standards. You have focused on the development of English and mathematics since the previous inspection. Current assessments show that the progress pupils make in writing is now more in line with that of reading. Although pupils' calculation skills have improved, still too few reach the expected standard in mathematics across the school.

A strong feature of the school is its full and engaging curriculum. For example, pupils have good opportunities to gain knowledge and practise skills in science. Pupils, parents and carers are positive about how teachers help pupils to stay healthy and develop wide opportunities for physical activity and sport. In class, pupils behave well and work hard. Teachers make learning interesting and celebrate pupils' successes with rewards and recognition through house points and certificates.

Parents, particularly of children who have special educational needs (SEN) and/or disabilities, are very positive about the care and encouragement their children

receive. As one parent, reflecting the opinion of others, wrote: 'The teachers are dedicated and approachable. The school atmosphere is positive and welcoming.'

Staff morale is high and, together with governors, there is a commitment from you all to raise standards. For example, you have extended the Nursery day to provide more opportunities for children to become ready for full-time school and better skilled to reach the expected standard at the end of early years. Currently, however, teaching in Nursery is not sufficiently focused on hastening children's progress across the full curriculum to achieve this.

You discuss information from pupils' assessments with teachers and plan interventions which help pupils overcome gaps in their knowledge. Over time, the intentions to increase the rate of progress made by pupils so that they reach the expected or higher levels for their age have not been fully realised. You and governors review assessment information and plan actions to improve teaching. Currently, you are not checking sharply enough to identify whether improvement strategies are having the desired impact on pupils' progress and attainment.

Safeguarding is effective.

Comprehensive checks are made to ensure that all adults working with pupils are safe to do so. Staff at all levels use their training well to spot, record and report any concerns that a pupil may be at risk of harm. Pupils place their trust in staff to listen and respond to things that have made them anxious. As leaders, you work closely with other services that provide support to families to ensure that children are safe. You have recently improved the system to log actions taken in response to concerns. However, during the inspection, it could be seen that not all actions were yet recorded in a way which meant they could be easily retrieved.

Pupils say that they feel safe in school and parents are confident that this is the case. Pupils receive effective teaching on how to stay safe, including when using the internet. Pupils say that others are friendly. As one pupil explained, 'Friendships are important, and everyone has friends.' School records show that you respond promptly to any concerns about bullying and that problems are solved. Most pupils agree that this is the case. However, the rigour and effectiveness of your approach to resolving concerns are not clear to all pupils. Equally, a very small number of parents say that problems sometimes persist. You have plans to revisit this aspect of safety with parents and pupils as part of your health and well-being strategy.

Inspection findings

- I first looked at the teaching of mathematics and, in particular, the challenge for the most able pupils. This is because, over recent years, standards have been low in key stages 1 and 2. Levels of attainment for this year, at both key stages, again show that fewer pupils meet expected standards or reach greater depth than do so in reading and writing. Similarly, progress information for pupils across the school shows that, in most year groups, mathematics is the weaker area of learning. Over the past year, you have sought to foster pupils' enjoyment

of mathematics through 'maths week'. Pupils now enjoy mathematics and are proud of their success in a mathematics project with Bath Rugby Club players.

- A sample of workbooks showed the most able pupils tackled problems systematically and explained their thinking clearly. However, the proportion of pupils working in this way is low. In lessons, it was evident that tasks were routinely scaled down to enable middle-ability pupils to work independently. The challenge and support which would enable more of them to tackle the work set at the higher level were not evident. Some pupils' progress is hampered by an insecure understanding of the place value of number. You have made knowledge of number a focus of school development in recent years, but some pupils from middle and lower starting points still lack sufficient understanding. This limits their opportunities to catch up. You have recognised that strong middle leadership will hasten progress in the teaching of mathematics, but this has not yet been fully developed to have an impact on standards.
- My second line of enquiry was to explore the impact of funding to secure the achievement of disadvantaged pupils. The proportion of disadvantaged pupils in the school is higher than the national average. You use regular discussions of pupils' progress to review and revise the extra support funded through the additional pupil premium funding. You were able to demonstrate through assessment information and pupils' work that, mostly, this group of pupils make good progress. Some of the most able disadvantaged pupils are deepening their learning and some middle-ability pupils are catching up to the expected level for their age. Current progress information shows that intervention has been more successful in reading and writing than in mathematics.
- The school development plan highlights the need for pupils to acquire early writing skills more securely in key stage 1. My analysis of recent outcomes highlighted particularly the lower attainment of boys. In some year groups, the high proportion of boys who have SEN and/or disabilities has, to an extent, skewed published figures. However, in your discussions with teachers, you have focused on individual boys in most need of improving their progress. I looked at the workbooks of a sample of boys across the school that had low starting points.
- In many cases over time, boys' ability to write fluently and develop stamina for writing has been hampered by difficulties with forming letters correctly. Their current work shows that they have all made good progress this year in handwriting, sentence structure, spelling and punctuation. However, they have not yet reached the expected standard for their age.
- I reviewed the teaching of phonics skills because standards have been considerably lower than the national average for some time. You have increased the emphasis on the teaching of phonics skills in Year 1. Pupils practise their reading in subjects across the curriculum. Children now begin learning phonics in the Nursery class by listening to the sounds in the names of things around them. We saw that pupils of all abilities, including those who have SEN and/or disabilities and the disadvantaged, were challenged to learn at the appropriate level. For example, pupils in Year 1 could explain how the spelling for the sound 'n' was different in 'next', 'knight' and 'gnome'. This increased challenge has led to almost the whole year group reaching the expected standard for their age.

Next steps for the school

Leaders and those responsible for governance should ensure that:

- leaders check the impact of the planned actions they are taking to raise standards more sharply
- the effectiveness of middle leaders is developed so that they have more impact on improving the standards and progress in their areas of responsibility
- more effective teaching of mathematics challenges all pupils and leads to improved outcomes by the end of key stages 1 and 2
- the quality of teaching in the Nursery is strengthened to quicken the progress of children in the early years
- parents and pupils understand and have confidence in the school's rigorous approach to tackling bullying
- new systems for logging safeguarding actions are embedded.

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

Yours sincerely

Wendy Marriott
Ofsted Inspector

Information about the inspection

I visited classes and reviewed pupils' work in mathematics, writing, phonics and science. I discussed current assessment information with leaders. I met with a group of pupils and spoke to others in their lessons and at lunchtime. I met with governors and spoke to a representative of the local authority on the telephone. I reviewed a range of documentation, including safeguarding records, the school's self-evaluation and the school development plan. I discussed safeguarding training with a small group of staff. I took account of the views of parents through discussions at the start of the school day. I also took note of the 19 responses and 14 additional comments parents made on Ofsted's online survey, Parent View. I took account of one letter from a parent. The views of staff and pupils were also taken account of through reading 18 responses to the staff questionnaire and 21 responses to the pupil questionnaire.