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Mr P Smith  
Headteacher  
Haselbury Plucknett Church of England First School  
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Dear Mr Smith

### **Short inspection of Haselbury Plucknett Church of England First School**

Following my visit to the school on 17 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 September 2014.

#### **This school continues to be good.**

The leadership team has maintained the good quality of education in the school since the last inspection. The areas identified for improvement during that inspection, including teachers' checking that pupils are supported and challenged in lessons, and improving pupils' cultural awareness and understanding, have been addressed well.

Since the previous inspection, there have been a number of changes at the school. You took up your post in 2016 and the school federated with Merriott First School, where you are also the headteacher, in June 2017. A single governing body is now responsible for both schools. You have appointed a number of new staff, which has strengthened leadership across the federation. The school became responsible for pre-school provision in September 2017 and now provides education for children from the age of two to nine.

You and your leadership team are passionate about raising pupils' academic achievement, nurturing their personal development and lifting their aspirations for the future. You have taken effective action to do this. You are broadening pupils' experiences and raising their self-esteem by making good use of visits and visiting experts. You are also improving the quality of teaching and enabling pupils to engage in a wide range of sporting and musical activities. You successfully communicate the school's vision of 'Learning and Growing Together' and have the confidence of staff and parents and carers. You have provided staff with access to high-quality training. Consequently, staff morale is high, teamwork is strong and a culture of continuous improvement is firmly embedded. Staff are keen to share their

expertise and to learn from others within the federation, and from staff in the Crewkerne and Ilminster Partnership of Schools.

Many parents expressed their support for you, the leadership team and teaching and support staff. Comments such as: 'a wonderful, creative, inclusive, friendly environment in which our children thrive' and 'we are very happy with the variety of learning opportunities and meaningful pastoral care' capture the overwhelmingly positive views expressed by parents. Pupils like being at school. They told me that they enjoy their lessons and are confident they are making good progress. They particularly appreciate the range of sporting activities provided. They value the opportunities they have to mix and develop friendships with pupils from other local small schools before they move on to middle school.

### **Safeguarding is effective.**

Leaders and governors have ensured that safeguarding arrangements are fit for purpose. The required checks on staff and other adults who help out in the school are carried out thoroughly, and records are meticulously organised. Staff training is up to date. Adults are clear that they all share the responsibility for pupils' safety and welfare. You are persistent in seeking advice and guidance when there are concerns about pupils. You work closely with other professionals to secure speedy support for pupils and their families.

Pupils I spoke to told me they feel safe and well cared for at the school, and parents and staff agree. Pupils' friendships are important to them. They trust their friends and say they help them, so they 'don't feel lonely or left out'. Pupils are confident that most pupils behave well most of the time and that staff deal well with any issues that do arise. Pupils express their confidence in adults at the school and would have no hesitation in sharing any worries or concerns they may have with them. Pupils articulate a good understanding of how to manage personal risk, including when using modern technology.

### **Inspection findings**

- At the start of the inspection, we agreed the lines of enquiry we would focus on. Our first line of enquiry was to ascertain how leaders have secured the improvement in pupils' progress in writing and mathematics through key stage 1. We looked particularly at those pupils who left early years in the emerging prior attainment band.
- You have ensured that high-quality professional development has strengthened teaching. Teachers have a secure knowledge of what pupils need to know and be able to do to achieve the expected or higher standard in writing and in mathematics. The assessment of pupils' progress has developed well and provides accurate information to guide the planning of lessons. Support staff are fully briefed and understand how they can help pupils to be successful in lessons. Teachers provide pupils with precise feedback on what they have done well and give them individual goals to aim for to help them improve further. All of these elements contribute to the typically good, and sometimes rapid, progress made

by pupils from their starting points, including those in the emerging prior attainment band.

- Practical resources and activities are used effectively to ensure pupils' mathematical knowledge and skills develop well. Teachers ensure that pupils' handwriting is clear and legible. They also pay close attention to developing pupils' phonics knowledge and, as a result, the accuracy of pupils' spelling in their written work is improving. Pupils' writing in their English books illustrates clearly the standard they are capable of achieving, including the higher standard being achieved by most-able pupils. However, pupils do not consistently produce written work of the same standard when writing in other subjects.
- Next, we checked to see if pupils in Years 3 and 4 make good progress in reading, writing and mathematics, and if they are well prepared to move to Year 5 work in middle school.
- You have encouraged the use of fiction and non-fiction texts to capture pupils' imagination, to prompt them to research, to ask questions and to make reasoned deductions. By experiencing a range of texts, pupils are exposed to a broad and challenging range of vocabulary. This helps to improve pupils' reading comprehension skills and provides them with the stimulus to write for a range of purposes. Programmes that help pupils to spell accurately and to use grammar and punctuation correctly support pupils to write with confidence. Pupils make good progress in reading and writing. They respond well to the feedback they receive and are motivated to improve the standard of their work. However, the presentation and accuracy of pupils' written work is often of a better standard in their English books than in other subjects.
- The emphasis placed on the speedy recall of number facts ensures that pupils calculate accurately when tackling mathematical problems. The use of practical resources in mathematics work is promoted extensively. This is enabling pupils to develop the skills they need to explain their reasoning and prove their understanding. Pupils are challenged to apply their mathematical skills, explain their chosen method when solving problems and so make good progress.
- Pupils in Year 4 work in a 'transition book' for the last part of the year. They enjoy working in these books and are proud to be taking them with them to the middle school as a record of their achievement. Pupils' progress in reading, writing and mathematics is rising in Years 3 and 4. More pupils are achieving the expected or higher standard this year than in previous years, and they are well prepared for the challenges of Year 5.
- Finally, we explored the reasons for the improvement in children's achievement in the early years. Teaching is informed by a good understanding of the early years curriculum and how young children learn best. Children are assessed accurately. The deployment of well-informed support staff and the provision of activities that engage and motivate children contribute well to children's good progress and achievement. Focused adult-led sessions ensure that children make good progress in key areas, such as their understanding of phonics, how to form letters correctly and the recognition and understanding of numbers. The knowledge and skills children develop in these aspects prepare them very well for their work in Year 1.

- The early years provision has been enhanced this year by embracing the pre-school within the school's remit. You have championed the strong focus on ensuring that children have a seamless, positive experience through early years. Children are involved in whole-school activities such as visits and celebrations. Opportunities such as these ensure that they become familiar with older children, adults in the school and the school building. This smooths their transition into Reception and contributes well to their achievement in all areas of learning.

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

Leaders and those responsible for governance should ensure that:

- pupils sustain the standard of written work they produce in their English lessons when writing in other subjects.

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 Somerset. This letter will be published on the Ofsted website.

Yours sincerely

Alison Cogher  
**Ofsted Inspector**

### **Information about the inspection**

During the inspection, I met with a group of pupils from Years 2, 3 and 4 before they left to go on a school trip. They shared with me their work in books and their views about school. I met with the headteacher and head of teaching and learning. Together, we toured classrooms and looked at pupils' work and information about their progress. We looked at a range of school documents, including the school's improvement plan and safeguarding information. Four members of the governing body, including the chair, met with me to discuss changes at the school since the last inspection and their vision for the school's future. I considered responses to the staff questionnaire. I gathered parents' views by speaking to them at the start of the school day and through Ofsted's online questionnaire Parent View.