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Mr Mark Allen
Headteacher
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Dear Mr Allen

Short inspection of Upton St Leonards Church of England Primary School

Following my visit to the school on 9 October 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 March 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 have a clear vision that pupils should receive the best possible education, building 'a love of life and learning'. You are well supported by your committed team of staff and knowledgeable governors. Your self-evaluation is accurate, based on a rigorous programme of monitoring. Through discussions during the day, it was evident that leaders have a secure understanding of the school's strengths and what needs to improve further. The areas I identified as needing further development already form part of your plans for school improvement.

You acted on the recommendations from the previous inspection to improve teaching by providing a wide range of training opportunities for teachers. Your new leadership team takes a greater role in checking the quality of teaching, working alongside colleagues to help increase their effectiveness. The new approach to teaching mathematics sets high expectations of all pupils, particularly the most able. The challenging work has resulted in rising attainment and better progress. By the end of both key stage 1 and key stage 2, the proportions of pupils reaching the expected and higher standard for their age are above those found nationally.

You ensure that the curriculum continues to evolve to capture pupils' interests. Following a dip in the progress pupils made in reading by the end of key stage 2 in 2018, you have tried a new approach to teaching comprehension skills. The impact is already evident as Year 6 pupils display good confidence in reading complex

texts. This approach is not yet used widely across the school to enable more key stage 2 pupils to reach the expected standards for their age. In writing, innovative ways to inspire pupils to write are successful and the quality of writing has improved over the past year. However, teaching does not always ensure that the most able pupils extend their skills to the full and achieve high standards.

Parents are overwhelmingly supportive of the school. They praise the caring and welcoming environment where their children are able to thrive both academically and personally. They welcome opportunities to become involved in their children's learning, such as the 'open classroom' events. Pupils say they enjoy their learning, giving examples such as learning the clarinet, speaking French, or outdoor learning in the 'forest school'.

Safeguarding is effective.

The culture of safeguarding is strong because you, your staff and your governors give the safety of pupils the highest priority. Staff and governors receive appropriate training to identify possible signs of risk and harm. Records show that teachers are up to date on their training, including guidance in recognising the dangers of extremism and terrorism. You follow the statutory guidance diligently when recruiting and vetting staff before appointing them. Governors check that the school's single central record is maintained accurately. They also check that staff understand how to report any concerns about safeguarding promptly.

Pupils say they feel safe in school because they are well looked after and 'everyone is very polite to each other'. They say there is very little bullying and that staff always sort this out swiftly and effectively should it occur. Leaders keep a close eye on the welfare of any pupils whose circumstances make them vulnerable. They go to great lengths to ensure that pupils and their families receive the help and support they need.

Most pupils attend regularly and are rarely late for school. Leaders work effectively with other professionals, such as the family support worker, to encourage regular attendance. Because you are tenacious in following up any absences, the attendance of a small number of pupils with high absence rates shows improvement.

Inspection findings

- My first line of enquiry focused on the effectiveness of leaders' strategies to promote good progress in reading. In 2018, progress across key stage 2 was not as strong as in previous years, especially for pupils of middle ability. In response, leaders have taken prompt action to improve teaching, with a strong emphasis on developing the more complex skills of reading. Teachers encourage all pupils to read books written by a wide range of authors through the challenges they set. Each classroom has an extensive range of new literature for pupils to read. I saw the positive impact of the new teaching approach in a Year 6 lesson. Pupils were able to pinpoint how the author used language to build tension. When

reading to me, Year 6 pupils showed they are developing a good knowledge of sophisticated vocabulary which aids their understanding of more difficult texts. However, as yet, the new approach is not used extensively enough across all key stage 2 classes to ensure that pupils make better progress.

- In writing, in previous years, the most able pupils reached the expected standard for their age in key stage 2 but not all achieved greater depth. During my visit, I observed teaching and scrutinised a range of pupils' written work. Pupils use their imagination well to create characters and atmosphere when writing stories and poems, such as those about autumn. Spelling is increasingly accurate, with the correct use of punctuation to help clarify meaning. Less evident was pupils' ability to use more formal language and show a consistent mastery of different styles of writing.
- My next line of enquiry looked at improvements in mathematics teaching in key stage 2 since the previous inspection, especially in challenging the most able. Teachers ensure that pupils have time to learn and consolidate basic number skills before using this knowledge to reason and solve complex problems. Pupils talk keenly about the 'do it, secure it, deepen it' approach to learning which they enjoy. Teaching provides suitable challenge for all groups of pupils, including the most able pupils who are stretched to the full. The work in pupils' books and their achievement in the end-of-key-stage-2 tests indicate that more pupils are working at and beyond the expected standard for their age than is found nationally.
- My final line of enquiry looked at how well leaders meet the needs of key stage 1 pupils who did not achieve well in the early years. You have implemented effective systems to fully meet the needs of pupils who are vulnerable. Leaders monitor very closely the support the school provides to enable pupils to make the best possible progress and catch up with their peers. Your staff are skilled in giving the right levels of support and challenge, so that pupils are increasingly successful in learning and fully integrated into school life.

Next steps for the school

Leaders and those responsible for governance should ensure that:

- teaching across all classes continues to develop pupils' understanding of complex language to increase their comprehension in reading
- pupils continue to extend their writing skills by using a range of styles of writing, to enable them to achieve greater depth.

I am copying this letter to the chair of the governing body, 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

Sandra Woodman
Ofsted Inspector

Information about the inspection

During the inspection, I met with you and discussed the school's self-evaluation, information about pupils' progress and improvements since the previous inspection. Together, we observed learning in classrooms and looked at a range of pupils' work in books. We talked to pupils about their work in lessons. I listened to several pupils read from Year 6 and talked to pupils about their experience of school life. I visited the playground at breaktime and talked informally with staff and pupils. I held meetings with middle leaders and with three governors. In addition, I spoke to an external adviser who supports the school. I looked at a range of written evidence, including documents relating to safeguarding and attendance information. I took account of the written comments of 47 parents who completed Ofsted's online questionnaire, Parent View, and the views of parents who spoke to me before the start of the school day. I also took account of the views of 29 members of staff who completed questionnaires.