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John Jolliffe  
Executive Headteacher  
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Dear Mr Jolliffe

### **Short inspection of Thorverton Church of England Primary School**

Following my visit to the school on 21 November 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 December 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 the head of school effectively lead an enthusiastic staff team that is determined to provide exciting learning experiences for your pupils. Parents and carers describe the school as 'a very happy school' where 'adults make learning fun'. All staff members who responded to the staff questionnaire said that they were proud to work at the school.

Parents who spoke with me during the inspection told me that they appreciated how you or the head of school are available each day. They also noted how well teachers and support staff met their children's needs. One parent stated, 'My child's teacher challenges, engages and brings learning to life.'

Pupils enjoy opportunities to share their views and concerns, as shown by the large percentage of pupils that responded to the inspection questionnaire. Pupils' responses show that they enjoy school, feel safe and are valued by teachers and support staff.

At the previous inspection, you were asked to make sure that teachers emphasised the development of pupils' basic numeracy and calculation skills. You were also required to ensure that early years staff effectively used ongoing assessments of children's progress to develop particular skills. These formed two lines of enquiry for

this inspection and are discussed later in this report.

You have provided high-quality training for teachers in mathematics since the previous inspection. This has led to pupils becoming responsible for selecting the appropriate level of challenge to move them forward in mathematics. Pupils' workbooks show numerous examples of them engaging in practical and theoretical problem-solving activities. Current assessments show that this improved provision is raising standards in mathematics across the school. The leader of mathematics has correctly identified the need to further develop pupils' understanding of mathematical vocabulary. This initiative has been introduced across the school and teachers are expecting pupils to use this improved understanding when tackling increasingly demanding tasks.

Governors have a deep understanding of the school's strengths and areas for improvement. This is because they study the detailed reports that you provide and seek first-hand evidence of the impact of interventions introduced across the school. They provide the right balance of support and challenge. A good example of this was the recent check by governors of the impact of additional spending on music tuition. Governors gave me specific examples of how this initiative has enabled targeted pupils to show greater concentration in their work and become confident enough to lead musical groups. During monitoring visits, governors talk with pupils about their experiences of learning. This gives them a detailed awareness of pupils' attitudes throughout the school.

### **Safeguarding is effective.**

All safeguarding arrangements are fit for purpose and you make sure that records are well maintained. There is a strong safeguarding culture throughout the school and members of staff are kept up to date with safeguarding training due to the vigilance of school leaders and governors. Leaders have introduced stringent checks to make sure that all members of staff are safe to work with children.

Parents told me that their children are safe and that leaders and teachers listen to them if they have any concerns, and act positively to find solutions.

Pupils know how to stay safe in school, in the community and when online. Pupils said that bullying was extremely rare and were confident that staff would act decisively to solve any issues.

### **Inspection findings**

- At the start of the inspection, we agreed the particular aspects of the school's work on which the inspection would focus.
- The first line of enquiry considered how effectively teachers develop pupils' basic numeracy and calculation skills. This was a requirement following the previous inspection.
- Leaders have introduced a different approach to teaching and learning in mathematics since the previous inspection. This has led to improving outcomes in

the subject. In 2018, key stage 2 pupils' attainment in mathematics was high compared to the national average. Girls' attainment was significantly above average at the expected and higher standards. Boys' attainment was generally in line with the national average at the expected standard and well above at the higher standard. Pupils at key stage 2 made stronger progress in mathematics in 2018 than in 2017.

- Teachers in all classes make sure that pupils start their mathematics tasks at an appropriately challenging level. During the inspection, Year 5 and 6 pupils were working effectively to solve problems involving powers and inverse square and cube roots of numbers. During my scrutiny of pupils' workbooks and visits to classrooms, I found examples of pupils working at the higher standards in mathematics. Pupils were keen to describe how they enjoyed the range of challenges provided by their teachers. In one example, pupils were calculating the distance that their teacher would travel on a charity ride to Exmouth. Leaders have recognised that pupils who have a strong understanding of mathematical terminology are able to solve increasingly complex challenges. Leaders have introduced initiatives to further develop this aspect across the school.
- The next line of enquiry assessed how leaders ensure that all staff in the early years use accurate assessments of children's progress and use these to develop particular skills. This was a requirement following the previous inspection.
- My visit to the early years class with the head of school provided evidence to show that all staff are making accurate, ongoing assessments of children's learning. These assessments are used effectively to plan exciting activities that lead children towards achieving the required early learning goals. Outcomes in the early years have risen significantly since the previous inspection and the proportion of children achieving a good level of development has risen from below the national average in 2015 to well above average in the following three years. Governors have recently identified the need to improve the outside learning environment so that the children can engage in the same high-quality learning activities that are currently available in the classroom.
- The third line of enquiry considered how well leaders checked that additional funding was being used effectively to help disadvantaged pupils. The use of additional funding for disadvantaged pupils is arranged across all of the schools in the federation. There are few disadvantaged pupils at your school and it is important that parents can see that the initiatives paid for by the funding are having a positive impact.
- Governors provided clear evidence to show that they keep a very close check on the use of additional money. They have monitored the impact of various initiatives and can give specific examples to show how pupils have benefited. Often, these benefits are in the form of improved self-esteem and confidence. Governors and leaders can show how these improvements have an impact on pupils' academic outcomes.
- The final line of enquiry assessed how effectively leaders have acted to address the high rate of persistent absence for disadvantaged pupils in 2016. Leaders were aware of this issue that placed the group of pupils in the top 10% nationally for persistent absence. Their effective actions have led to significant

improvements so that the current rates of absence for all groups of pupils are below other schools nationally. Leaders worked sympathetically with families to remove barriers to regular attendance.

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

Leaders and those responsible for governance should ensure that:

- teachers continue to develop pupils' mathematical vocabulary so that they can use this when they address increasingly challenging problem-solving tasks
- the outside learning environment in the early years is further developed to provide the same high-quality learning activities that are currently available in the classroom.

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

Yours sincerely

Paul Hodson  
**Ofsted Inspector**

### **Information about the inspection**

During the inspection, I met with you, the head of school, various school leaders, the chair of the governing body and other governors. I had a telephone conversation with the local authority adviser for schools. We visited classrooms to assess the progress being made by pupils. I looked at pupils' workbooks and talked with pupils in classes and at a separate meeting. We considered the progress being made by current pupils.

We looked at a range of documentary evidence, including the school's evaluation of its own performance and plans for improvement. I looked at various documents related to safeguarding, including the single central record and governors' reports. We also assessed current rates of attendance for groups of pupils. I gathered views from parents at the school gate and took account of 11 responses to the online questionnaire, Parent View. I reviewed several free-text responses from parents and findings from the staff and pupil questionnaires.