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Piccadilly Gate
Store Street
Manchester
M1 2WD

T 0300 123 4234
www.gov.uk/ofsted



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Mrs Jayne Vanstone
Headteacher
Hawkchurch Church of England School
Hawkchurch
Axminster
Devon
EX13 5XD

Dear Mrs Vanstone

Short inspection of Hawkchurch Church of England School

Following my visit to the school on 5 June 2019, 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 your predecessor school was judged to be good in November 2015.

This school continues to be good.

The leadership team has maintained the good quality of education in the school since the last inspection. Since your appointment as full-time headteacher in September 2018, you have set out a strong commitment to the pursuit of excellence. The leaders of the academy trust provide high-quality support and rigorous challenge, helping you to establish the right direction for the school. The wider opportunities provided by the academy trust enable teachers to work together to share effective practice, moderate standards and receive training. Together with your dedicated team of staff, you have made the necessary improvements while sustaining the best aspects of the school.

The school is a friendly and welcoming place where everyone is treated with respect and consideration. Warm and effective relationships between pupils and staff help to promote high standards and enjoyment in learning. Pupils are known and cared for as individuals. This is what appeals to parents, who are delighted that their children attend this 'amazing' school. The atmosphere created by you, your staff and governors is extremely conducive to learning. Classrooms are bright and attractive, with pupils' work proudly displayed. Pupils say that teachers plan interesting work and they are very enthusiastic about all the school has to offer.

Because pupils have not achieved as well as they could in mathematics recently, you introduced new strategies to improve teaching. These are ensuring that pupils build their knowledge of numbers effectively. Increasingly, teachers set work that develops pupils' fluency in calculation and their ability to solve problems. However, pupils lack regular opportunities to explain their ideas and methods which would

deepen their understanding still further. Nevertheless, across the school more pupils are achieving appropriately or better this year.

You identified that some pupils could make stronger progress in reading. Consequently, you made changes to the curriculum to improve the teaching of reading. You strengthened the teaching of phonics, with notable success, and currently most Year 1 pupils are making strong progress. You provide pupils with high-quality texts to spark their interest and extend their knowledge of vocabulary. However, you acknowledge that there is more to do to embed this approach to make certain that pupils' comprehension skills are developed to the full.

You, together with your staff and governors, know your school very well. Leaders monitor pupils' achievement very closely. You have high expectations that all pupils achieve well, including disadvantaged pupils and pupils with special educational needs and/or disabilities (SEND). Plans for their provision are tightly focused on improving teaching to address their needs. Pupils are making stronger progress because of carefully targeted work and effective support.

Safeguarding is effective.

Safeguarding has a high priority in school. Leaders from across the academy trust make regular checks on systems and practice to promote a culture of vigilance. Recruitment procedures for appointing staff follow the statutory guidance stringently. Staff and governors receive regular training in the latest requirements for safeguarding, including how to keep pupils safe from extremism and radicalisation. Staff are well trained in identifying possible signs of risk and harm. They are clear about how to report any concerns, alerting leaders promptly to any issues. Leaders are tenacious in following up any referrals to make sure they receive a satisfactory response.

You know all the families of children who attend Hawkchurch very well and are diligent about pupils' welfare, especially any whose circumstances make them vulnerable. You work closely with local agencies to ensure that pupils receive the help and support they need. Attendance is broadly average and shows improvement this year. This is because of your effective work to promote regular attendance and punctuality by supporting parents with any problems in this respect.

Pupils say they feel safe in school because staff make them feel secure. Behaviour is good in lessons and around the school. Older pupils act very responsibly, clearing up after lunch and helping younger pupils at play. They have a good understanding of what constitutes bullying and how to combat this, although it seldom happens here. Pupils are knowledgeable about staying safe on the internet, knowing never to give out personal information to strangers.

Inspection findings

- My first line of enquiry looked at improvements in mathematics teaching, especially to increase the number of pupils achieving highly. The mathematics

leader introduced a new approach to teaching, where pupils build up their knowledge and then apply their new learning immediately to solving problems. As a result of effective staff training, teachers are better able to plan learning to develop pupils' fluency in calculation and to increase their understanding of mathematical concepts. Teachers insist that pupils use the correct terminology when discussing their ideas. The work in pupils' books shows that this approach is having a positive impact and a greater number of pupils across the school are achieving well or very well. Increasingly, the most able pupils are challenged by the 'diving for depth' tasks that stretch their thinking still further. However, pupils' ability to explain their reasoning and methods is not extensive enough to deepen their understanding further.

- My second line of enquiry was about pupils' reading. While the majority of pupils achieve appropriately in reading, you are aware that progress could be stronger. You ensure that teachers plan work to develop pupils' knowledge of sophisticated vocabulary in order to improve their comprehension of texts. Pupils have specific input in reading, based on a precise assessment of their strengths and weaknesses. During the inspection, I observed you working with individual pupils to develop their comprehension skills, skilfully promoting discussion to increase their understanding. As yet, there has been insufficient time to see the full impact of this approach to ensure that progress is the best it can be.
- You responded swiftly to the dip in the number of Year 1 pupils who reached the expected standard for their age in the phonics screening check in recent years. Teaching of letters and sounds is very thorough to ensure that pupils develop effective early reading and spelling skills. Work precisely matched to pupils' needs provides the appropriate support and challenge for all groups of pupils. During the inspection, I observed key stage 1 pupils using their strong knowledge of phonics to read with increasing fluency and confidence.
- Finally, I looked at how well leaders use additional funding to support the needs of disadvantaged pupils and pupils with SEND. You monitor their progress precisely to ensure that you identify each pupil's needs. Using this analysis, you provide work that enables them to catch up quickly with others in school with similar starting points. Additional support from staff improves pupils' self-esteem and confidence as learners. You know exactly where any differences in achievement remain and are taking effective action to make sure these pupils make the best possible progress.

Next steps for the school

Leaders and those responsible for governance should ensure that:

- teachers continue to help pupils develop their reasoning skills in mathematics by requiring them to explain their methods and thinking more extensively
- teaching across all classes continues to develop pupils' understanding of complex language to increase their comprehension in reading.

I am copying this letter to the chair of the board of trustees and the chief executive officer of the multi-academy trust, the director of education for the Diocese of

Salisbury, the regional schools commissioner and the director of children's services for Devon. 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. I observed you listening to several pupils read from key stage 1 and key stage 2. I talked to pupils about their work in lessons and their experience of school life. I visited the playground at lunchtime and talked informally with staff and pupils. I held meetings with the trust's chief executive officer and with two trustees from the academy. I looked at a range of written evidence, including documents relating to safeguarding and attendance information. I took account of the 17 responses from parents who completed Ofsted's online questionnaire, Parent View, their written comments and the views of parents who spoke to me before the start of the school day. I also took account of the views of six members of staff who completed questionnaires.