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Dear Miss Wilson

Short inspection of Cheddar First School

Following my visit to the school on 30 June 2016, 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 January 2011.

This school continues to be good.

You have maintained the good quality of education in the school since the last inspection. You, your staff and governors are clearly committed to providing pupils with a 'positive, secure and happy environment' in which to learn. I saw this quotation, from the school's website, evident in your work throughout the day. Yours is a school where parents show a high degree of satisfaction and welcome the role they are encouraged to play as genuine partners in their child's education. Staff are also supportive of the direction you set for the school. Everyone pulls together with collective purpose to help pupils enjoy their learning experiences and do well.

Your focus on partnership working and collaboration is evident from the moment one enters your school. Pupils learn in a supportive, safe and trusting environment where all play their part in ensuring that school is happy and enjoyable. Pupils are encouraged to be themselves and share their ideas, in pairs during lessons or during meetings of the joint federation school council, for example when contributing to the anti-bullying charter, devised for all schools in the Mendip Federation. As a result of your approach, pupils, regardless of their differences in age, work and play together well in a welcoming and friendly manner.

You have improved boys' attainment in reading since the previous inspection and the approach you have taken is also benefiting their writing skills. Over the last few

years, boys' attainment in both reading and writing has risen to above the national average. A greater proportion of pupils than nationally reach the expected standard in the Year 1 phonics check.

You have also improved pupils' understanding of cultural diversity since the previous inspection. Your increased emphasis on community working is raising pupils' cultural understanding well. Activities and partnerships, including exchange trips with a school in India, stimulate pupils' curiosity about similarities and differences between people around the globe. Such trips, visits and visitors broaden pupils' horizons so they are now knowledgeable and well informed about aspects of cultural diversity.

Alongside your commitment to fostering a strong sense of community lies an equally strong focus on ensuring that pupils do well academically. You check pupils' progress carefully at half-termly intervals. You are continuing to adapt your approach to the curriculum and assessment to align with the government's requirements. You, staff and governors know how important it is that all pupils make good progress from the moment they start school. Disadvantaged pupils perform well and attain standards in all subjects that are often above other pupils both in school and nationally.

Safeguarding is effective.

All those involved in the school community are deeply committed to keeping pupils safe. You ensure that all necessary checks are made to confirm that those who wish to work with children are suitable. Training for safeguarding and child protection is up to date, regular and welcomed, enabling staff and governors to fully discharge their duties. Pupils and parents are confident that any issues are followed up. Pupils are knowledgeable about matters of safety through activities planned in the curriculum.

Your strong emphasis on community relationships promotes pupils' positive behaviour, with respect and courtesy as the norm. Staff have appropriate strategies and training in place to enable them to deal with any incidents of misbehaviour safely. Your strong commitment to pupils' safety is demonstrated through your work on e-safety, which has involved staff, pupils, parents and governors. The school makes effective links with outside agencies to cater for pupils whose circumstances make them vulnerable. Overall, the leadership team has ensured that all safeguarding arrangements are fit for purpose and records are detailed and of high quality. However, you expressed the view that when you have identified and passed on concerns, they have not always met the threshold for intervention.

Inspection findings

- Your efforts to provide a good education for the pupils of Cheddar First School came through strongly during my visit. The parents who completed Ofsted's online questionnaire, Parent View, and those who wrote in comments and letters, were full of praise for your leadership and the quality

of education their children receive at the school.

- Governors share your commitment to the school. They provide good support and the healthy level of challenge required of all governing bodies. In answering my questions, governors showed good knowledge of the school's work as well as understanding their strategic role. They recognise that greater precision in the quality of information they receive would enable them to check the impact of planned actions even more closely.
- Historically, absence rates for disadvantaged pupils at the school have been consistently higher than the national average for all groups of pupils. Despite resistance from some parents, your actions to tackle this issue have resulted in improvements in attendance and punctuality for most pupils in this group. The close working and professional relationship that exist between you and parents allow for some difficult messages to be given about the importance of the highest possible rates of attendance. Newsletters, assemblies and rewards all celebrate pupils' good and improving attendance. As a result of your efforts, most disadvantaged pupils attend well and arrive at school on time. You are aware that ongoing work is required with a small number of pupils whose attendance is not yet improving.
- Your partnership work with the Mendip Edge Federation and Cheddar Learning Partnership has been helpful to the school. You identify what can be learned from the latest educational thinking and conduct activities such as joint moderation of assessments of pupils' work. New ideas are thought through and introduced carefully. Approaches to the design of the curriculum or for tracking the progress of each pupil are reviewed before becoming established policy. Teachers benefit from training and share their expertise.
- Teaching is monitored through a variety of means, drawing on a range of information. However, monitoring activities insufficiently focus on the precise gains made in pupils' knowledge, skills or understanding. This restricts the ability of the governing body to establish exactly whether planned actions to improve the quality of learning for specific groups of pupils are being implemented successfully.
- Governors have rightly asked why standards in mathematics for girls of average and above average ability are not matching their achievement in other subjects. A scrutiny of books showed that activities do not sufficiently build number and problem solving skills and extend the depth of learning of girls in particular. This is especially so for the most able girls, whose work, unlike that of boys, suggested a reluctance to take risks or learn from the mistakes they make. This is holding girls back from reaching their full potential.
- The school has sought to develop pupils' literacy skills by extending their writing across a range of subjects. This began with a trial project in Year 3, where pupils made good use of technical vocabulary when writing geographical reports of Cheddar Village and contrasting the findings with a village in India. Similarly, in reporting on a trip to a Roman museum, pupils showed good knowledge of text types in different contexts. However, this

approach is not yet being used consistently in all year groups.

Next steps for the school

Leaders and those responsible for governance should ensure that:

- girls of average and above average ability are challenged and stretched to meet their full potential in mathematics
- monitoring activities focus on gains in pupils' knowledge, skill and understanding for specific groups of pupils across the school, with the findings reported accurately to the governing body
- the quality of pupils' writing in subjects other than English is improved.

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

Yours sincerely

Richard Light

Her Majesty's Inspector

Information about the inspection

I met with you and four members of staff. I also met with four representatives from the governing body. I accompanied you on visits to classes and together we looked at work in pupils' books. I took into account the survey results from Parent View, the online questionnaire for parents, together with responses to discussions with pupils and staff. I spoke with pupils across the school to discuss their work and gain their views of the school. I scrutinised your self-evaluation and reviewed a range of other documentation. I checked the effectiveness of your safeguarding and recruitment arrangements.