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Mrs Heidi Knight
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Dear Mrs Knight

Short inspection of Instow Community Primary School

Following my visit to the school on 23 November 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 November 2011.

This school continues to be good.

The leadership team has maintained the good quality of education in the school since the last inspection. The school experienced an unsettled period shortly after the previous inspection. Your arrival in September 2013 brought a renewed focus on outcomes for pupils. You have nurtured the school staff to bring about the necessary changes to improve the school's work. They work well as a team and entirely support your vision. Consequently, Instow Primary School is a good and improving school and a thriving learning community.

The governing body ably support you in your endeavours to improve the life chances of pupils in your care. You have overseen a programme of expansion of the school with increasing pupil numbers and the development of the premises. The school is currently oversubscribed. The high number of pupils coming from outside of the school's catchment area reflects its popularity as a favoured choice. Parents are effusive in their praise for the school. In their comments in the online survey, Parent View, many refer to the school's 'fabulous community spirit' and say that their children 'love going to school to learn'.

At the time of the previous inspection, leaders were asked to improve provision in the early years to ensure that all activities were designed to encourage children's independence. Historically, achievement at the end of the early years has not been good. On appointment, you quickly set about tackling this issue. Decisions by the governors to invest in the early years outdoor environment and to recruit staff with

the necessary early years expertise and ensure that they are trained effectively have contributed to children's higher achievement. Children are able to develop their curiosity, explore and make choices for themselves. In 2016, the proportion of children achieving a good level of development was broadly in line with the national average. Children made good progress from their different starting points. Governors' effective management of the pre-school provision has ensured that children get a good start to school life.

The previous inspection highlighted the need to raise progress for the most able pupils in reading. There is a rich culture of reading in the school now. This supports all pupils, including the most able, to make good progress. Pupils speak enthusiastically about their reading. Their reading journals show that they read widely and often and can identify how authors use language to evoke a response in the reader. Work in books shows that pupils use the techniques that they have identified in the books that they have read to good effect to enhance their writing. For example, pupils wrote strong emotive poems of remembrance in response to reading 'For the Fallen' by Laurence Binyon.

Since the previous inspection, the school has worked hard to improve the quality of assessment practice. Leaders were asked to improve the precision of marking so that the most able writers know how to improve. Leaders have provided intensive support for teachers to understand the expectations of the new national curriculum. Teachers are using their clear understanding of pupils' achievement to address previous gaps in learning. They are providing challenge for all writers as well as the most able writers. Historically, no pupils have attained above the expected standard in writing in the early years. In 2016, no child achieved greater depth in their writing. The positive impact of your team's work is resulting in a greater proportion of pupils on track to reach 'greater depth' in their writing this academic year.

Safeguarding is effective.

You ensure that staff are trained to an appropriate level. The governing body provide effective challenge and check that staff implement the school's comprehensive safeguarding policies effectively. Governors are quick to action improvements where concerns have been identified. For example, they have invested heavily in ensuring that the school site is secure. All visitors are appropriately accompanied in both the main school site and the pre-school.

Staff are tenacious in their work to keep pupils happy and safe from harm. Pupils confirm that they feel safe and that they know who to go to if they have concerns. They say that bullying happens occasionally but that leaders and teachers are good at 'sorting it out'. Pupils are supportive of each other. They are considerate and behave well. The well-established behaviour policy is closely followed and is understood by pupils and staff. As a result, incidents of poor behaviour are rare. The impact of the specialist team, who work in tandem with parents and carers, supports very well any issues relating to personal, social, emotional and health issues.

Inspection findings

- You and your team work tirelessly in reaching out and working with the community to prepare pupils well for life in modern Britain. Film-making projects with a local filmmaker on the topic 'If I could fly over Instow' and fund-raising through 'beach cleans' are two of the numerous ways in which you help pupils to play an active role in celebrating and improving their local environment. Trips to the city of Bristol help pupils to understand and appreciate a more urban and multicultural community than their own. Pupils' fund-raising has also sponsored two pupils, one in Gambia and one in Cambodia. Through this work, pupils recognise the power they have to make a difference.
- Leaders and governors make effective use of the additional funding for disadvantaged pupils to ensure that they make good progress. You provide a wealth of interventions, both academic and emotionally, to ensure that pupils achieve well. Where interventions do not work, your leadership team have been swift to stop them and adopt a new approach. The attendance of disadvantaged pupils has recently improved and is now in line with the national average.
- The leader for pupils who have special educational needs and/or disabilities carefully plans high-quality support for disadvantaged pupils. As a result, these pupils make accelerated progress from their starting points. Pupils with complex medical needs are particularly well catered for. You are assiduous in your determination to provide the very best support for every child. You work closely with external agencies to seek helpful advice and guidance. For example, in tackling the issue of weaker spelling, leaders have been proactive in seeking specialist advice. There are early signs that this work is beginning to make a marked difference.
- Leaders and governors have used their checks on the school's performance to identify and tackle areas of weakness. For example, you have provided effective staff training in phonics. As a result, there has been a trend of improvement in the number of pupils meeting the expected standard in Year 1. Standards have been in line with the national average for the last two years. This represents good progress from pupils' starting points. Teachers provide effective additional support for pupils so that by the end of Year 2, all pupils meet the expected standard.
- You and your team have accurately identified the need for greater technical accuracy in grammar, punctuation and spelling across the school. In particular, pupils' spelling is weaker than other technical aspects and this limits the effectiveness of some pupils' writing. Your literacy leader has already introduced strategies to overcome this. Work in books reflects an improving picture from September 2016, although implementation varies across the school. The work in pupils' books reflects accelerated progress since September, particularly for pupils in Years 5 and 6.
- Teachers place great emphasis on developing pupils' speaking and listening skills. Pupils are therefore confident and eloquent when presenting their work or reading aloud. Planned activities promote pupils' use of language and develop their vocabulary well. For example, pupils in Years 5 and 6 were articulate in debating the pros and cons for animal welfare in zoos.

- Pupils' overall attendance remains in line with the national average. You monitor absence carefully and work closely with families to improve their child's attendance. In particular, the attendance of Traveller children has dramatically improved. However, the rates of persistent absence of a few pupils in the school remain high.
- You and your teachers have planned a curriculum programme that is well balanced. It provides excitement, challenge and creativity. Pupils are motivated. They form questions, use effective research skills for finding the answers and develop their own success criteria. Pupils in Years 4 and 5 are enthralled by their recent topic 'Across the Atlantic'. Pupils have compared different countries' imports and exports and, in doing so, have considered the importance of Fairtrade. They have used their understanding of commodities, profit and loss to develop an enterprise, printing and making bags to sell.

Next steps for the school

Leaders and those responsible for governance should ensure that:

- teachers insist that pupils use grammar, punctuation and spelling with increasing accuracy to enhance the impact of their writing on the reader
- pupils' attendance continues to improve, particularly for pupils who are currently persistently absent.

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

Yours sincerely

Tracy Hannon
Her Majesty's Inspector

Information about the inspection

I met with you to discuss your evaluation of the school. We visited lessons together and looked at the work in pupils' books, spoke to the pupils about their learning and heard them read. Additionally, I looked at books, external reports and information about pupils' attainment and progress with the leaders for literacy and mathematics. I spoke with pupils from Years 2 to 6 to discuss their work and gather their views of the school. I spoke with four representatives from the governing body. I also took into account the 28 survey responses from Parent View, the online Ofsted questionnaire for parents, as well as the 14 responses to the staff questionnaire and 37 responses to the pupil questionnaire. I checked the effectiveness of your safeguarding and recruitment arrangements.

In particular, the inspection focused on the following key lines of enquiry

- How effective have leaders been in raising achievement in reading and writing for the most able pupils?
- How effective are leaders in ensuring that the expenditure of pupil premium funding is diminishing differences between disadvantaged pupils and others nationally?
- How successfully have leaders tackled improving provision in the Reception class to ensure that children make good progress to achieve good outcomes?
- To what extent have leaders been successful in improving the quality of teaching in writing so that pupils achieve equally well in this subject as they do in reading?
- How have leaders, including governors, ensured a culture of high-quality safeguarding across the school?