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Mr Simon Hall  
Executive Headteacher  
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Station Road  
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Dear Mr Hall

### **Short inspection of The Erme Primary School**

Following my visit to the school on 14 December 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. You and your head of school share an uncompromising drive for excellence. The governing body provides high-quality support and rigorous challenge. This has helped you to set the right direction for the school and to make the necessary improvements quickly. You have developed a strong and committed staff team whose members share your high ambition to provide the very best education for every child. Staff feel valued and are motivated 'to go the extra mile'. Consequently, pupils are extremely well prepared for the next stage of their education when they leave The Erme. Outcomes at the end of Year 6 continue to be above the national average in reading, writing and mathematics. Pupils make good progress in these subjects. In particular, an increasing proportion attain the higher standards at the end of Year 6.

Parents are overwhelmingly positive about the school's work. All parents who answered the online questionnaire, Parent View, said that they would recommend the school to others. Many say that the school is 'fantastic', with a number commenting on the 'family feel' and 'nurturing environment'. Parents clearly see the school as an important feature of the local community and value the education that their children receive.

Parents are unanimously positive about your joint leadership with the head of school. They value the fact that you 'know every child personally and take a real interest in their learning'. They speak positively about the increased number and range of clubs and activities provided. Nonetheless, some parents would like to see even more sport in the school and would appreciate more notice ahead of school events.

All leaders have an accurate and in-depth understanding of the school's strengths and areas for improvement. You welcome external challenge and work closely with other schools in the federation to ensure that teachers' assessments are secure. You routinely reflect upon and evaluate the effectiveness of the school's approach to further improvement. Staff nurture and challenge pupils to help them to achieve their very best. In addition, you show an impressive commitment to securing high-quality teachers for the future. Your less experienced teachers benefit from high-quality, intensive support to develop their teaching skills. You make certain that the most experienced teachers develop their talents in leading and supporting others in the federation. As a result, you have a motivated and skilled staff team.

### **Safeguarding is effective.**

There is a strong culture of safeguarding in the school. Your leadership team implements safeguarding arrangements effectively. The governing body is assiduous in its checks to ensure that systems to keep pupils safe are effective. The school's single central record of checks conducted on staff meets government requirements. It is rigorously maintained to keep pupils safe.

You provide high-quality training for all staff so that they know how to recognise and act on signs of harm and to assess the level of risk pupils face. Staff are vigilant in their work to keep pupils safe and secure in school. Consequently, pupils are well prepared to face risks in society. Pupils demonstrate a secure knowledge of internet safety. They confirm that they feel safe and that they know whom to go to if they have concerns. Pupils are supportive of each other. Older pupils model responsible attitudes and take their 'house captain' and 'family leader' roles seriously. Staff and pupils closely follow the well-established behaviour policy, which pupils designed. As a result, incidents of poor behaviour are rare. Displays around the school reinforce key messages to help pupils understand how to keep safe.

### **Inspection findings**

- You have developed effective systems to track the progress of different groups of pupils. You act swiftly when you notice that progress is slowing down. You make effective use of regular meetings with teachers to draw their attention to particular groups of pupils who may require additional support or challenge. This work has been particularly effective in ensuring that the few disadvantaged pupils in your school make good progress. Disadvantaged pupils often make better than expected progress to achieve a high standard.

- In 2016, there was a fall in the proportion of pupils meeting the expected standard in the phonics screening check at the end of Year 1. Since 2013, pupils have consistently achieved scores above the national average in phonics. The disappointing results in 2016 were a 'blip'. Pupils in Year 1 are on track to achieve high standards once again. Pupils who did not achieve the standard in the summer are now back on track because of the carefully targeted support you have put in place.
- You have rightly identified that for some boys, their rate of progress slows between the early years and Year 1. Similarly, although boys achieve standards at least in line with the national average at key stage 1, compared with the girls, fewer boys make better than expected progress than the girls in reading. The school is rightly leaving no stone unturned to find solutions to support boys in developing a love of reading. Boys who read to the inspector often had the phonic skills necessary to decode words. However, their expression and comprehension were weaker.
- Teachers explicitly teach the skills pupils need to be effective mathematicians. They provide pupils with a wealth of opportunities to apply their mathematical skills and knowledge across different subjects. For example, teachers used the work of cubist artist, Paul Klee, as inspiration to develop pupils' understanding of geometry. Pupils' work demonstrated a suitable understanding of symmetry and the properties of shape. Pupils are adept at applying their understanding of mathematics. They choose efficient methods when calculating number problems. Consequently, pupils achieve standards well above the national average at the end of both key stages 1 and 2. However, the progress of lower ability pupils in mathematics is not as strong as for other groups. These pupils are not able to recall number facts accurately or rapidly, which slows down their learning. You are putting in additional support to tackle this issue. However, more needs to be done so that the additional activities and work are properly matched to pupils' capabilities, and that teachers, including those involved in intervention work, provide the necessary support to further develop pupils' mathematical understanding.
- Historically, progress at key stage 1 has not been as strong as in key stage 2. Information for current pupils across the school shows that pupils achieve well in key stage 1. Outcomes are above the national average. However, the progress of the most able pupils sometimes slows, particularly in writing and for those in Year 2. Over time, teachers in Year 2 have not always provided the most able pupils with the necessary challenge that they need to reach the highest standards. You recognise that this is the next step in the school's development.
- Your work to develop pupils' spiritual, moral, social and cultural understanding is strong. The school's values effectively underpin the work of the school. Pupils take on suitable leadership roles, including those of house captain and family leader. Older pupils act as fine role models for younger pupils.

- Pupils learn to be responsible, kind and considerate to others. On a recent visit to a local home for elderly people, pupils listened attentively to the residents and worked alongside them making poppies. The poems that pupils wrote after the visit reflected their strong understanding of the profound sense of loss and tragedy experienced by those who lived through wartime.
- In the previous inspection, you were asked to improve the attendance of pupils. Initially, you stopped sanctioning holidays in term time. You have also worked closely with individual families and have raised the profile of the importance of attendance in newsletters. Overall attendance, and the attendance for particular groups such as disadvantaged pupils, are now in line with the national average. The number of pupils who are persistently absent from school has dramatically reduced. Pupils say that 'school is amazing'. The inspector saw pupils coming to school with broad smiles and cheerfully chatting to their friends. Parents confirm this. As one parent wrote, 'My child can't wait to get to school in the mornings.'

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

Leaders and those responsible for governance should ensure that:

- teachers provide the most able pupils in Year 2 with greater challenge so that more achieve a high standard, particularly in their writing
- leaders' checks focus precisely on the impact of teachers' actions on the progress of lower ability pupils in mathematics and boys' transition from Reception to Year 1.

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 and the head of school to discuss your evaluation of the school's work. We visited classes together, evaluated the quality of work in pupils' books and spoke to the pupils about their learning. I heard a group of pupils read aloud. I also scrutinised external reports and information about pupils' attainment and progress. I spoke with three representatives from the governing body and conducted a telephone conversation with a school adviser. I also took into account the 28 survey responses from Parent View, the Ofsted online questionnaire for parents, as well as 15 responses to the staff questionnaire and 10 responses to the pupil questionnaire. I checked the effectiveness of your safeguarding and recruitment arrangements.

In particular, the inspection focused on:

- the effectiveness of leadership in mathematics and the progress pupils make in the subject
- the progress of disadvantaged pupils across the school
- the achievement in key stage 1, particularly for the most able pupils
- pupils' attendance and safety.