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Mr Simon Futcher  
Headteacher  
Churchfields, the Village School  
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Melksham  
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Dear Mr Futcher

### **Short inspection of Churchfields, the Village School**

Following my visit to the school on 28 February 2017 with David New, Ofsted Inspector, 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 September 2012.

#### **This school continues to be good.**

The leadership team has maintained the good quality of education in the school since the last inspection. There have been a significant number of changes in staffing since the previous inspection. Since your appointment in January 2014, you have worked resolutely and effectively with staff to introduce a new, improved curriculum that inspires pupils and helps them to develop a love of learning. You have also had a strong focus on improving teaching and learning across the school. The impact of your work is reflected in the improved outcomes at the end of the early years and key stage 1. This was seen clearly in the standards of work in pupils' books. We agreed that the middle leaders now need to develop their roles further in improving the quality of teaching in their respective subjects.

You and your governors have a clear vision for the future of the school. Governors have a range of skills, which they use to support the school effectively. The timely information that they receive from you leads them to ask challenging questions about improvements. Governors share and celebrate the school's vision with the wider community. Your active involvement in the work of the local cluster of schools further promotes ongoing development for teachers and pupils.

At the previous inspection, inspectors identified some weaknesses, with teachers not matching work to different pupils' abilities. They also asked school leaders to raise achievement in writing, through writing in a range of formats and using adventurous vocabulary accurately and spelling accurately.

You have taken effective action to tackle each of these issues. Work in pupils' books shows that the tasks and extra challenges are now matched more closely to pupils' levels of ability. However, you agreed that there is room to challenge the most able pupils even further. Pupils' writing shows significant improvement as a result of the actions you have taken to improve not only English in general but writing specifically.

Parents value the good communication they receive, including emails and weekly newsletters. They say that the school has a 'real community feel'. You and your staff always have time for them. Parents say that their children are happy and that the school 'has been incredible in supporting me and my children'.

Pupils are very well behaved. They are polite and well mannered. Tolerance and respect for others are clear in pupils' behaviour. Spiritual, moral, social and cultural understanding are developed well. Pupils talked excitedly about the opportunities they are given, including opportunities to debate. Because of your well-planned curriculum, pupils know how to keep themselves safe, including when they work and play online. Pupils value the care and support they receive, with one telling me that, 'Teachers don't tell us the answer, they help us work through it'.

### **Safeguarding is effective.**

Your highly effective policies and procedures ensure that all safeguarding arrangements are fit for purpose and records are detailed and of good quality.

All staff have received comprehensive training so that they are aware of the different types of abuse, and the signs to look for. They fully understand the actions that they should take where they have a concern about the welfare of one of their pupils. Their comprehensive understanding of safeguarding procedures underpins their ability to carry out their crucial role in ensuring that pupils are safe, and know how to stay safe.

There is a strong culture of keeping pupils safe from harm, and your determination to achieve the right outcomes for the most vulnerable families is a reflection of your caring leadership. Timely referrals and active engagement with multi-agency support are documented and followed up carefully.

## Inspection findings

- In 2016, pupils' outcomes showed weaknesses in the attainment and progress that your middle-attaining pupils make in key stage 2 in mathematics and writing. We agreed this as a line of enquiry for the inspection. You took immediate action in the summer and a mathematics consultant has been working with your mathematics leader to improve her capacity and the provision of mathematics for the pupils. Pupils' work shows that they are developing a range of calculation strategies so that they make efficient choices when solving a mathematical challenge. This work is resulting in your current pupils, especially those middle-attaining pupils, showing good progress in mathematics and developing secure methods of calculation. The development of problem-solving and mathematical reasoning skills is enabling the pupils to work at greater depth. We agreed that it is also important not to lose sight of the fact that the most able pupils now need to be challenged further.
- Leaders' review of the curriculum has led to more explicit teaching of writing skills in English and improving progress and attainment in writing across the school. Teachers ensure that pupils, especially those of higher and middle ability, have a clearer understanding of how to work at greater depth within the expected standard in writing. Pupils are confident in checking and re-drafting work to ensure that it meets the higher expectations.
- The materials currently being used by staff in upper key stage 2 have provided pupils with clear ways to structure their writing and more opportunities to write at length, and in a range of genres and in subjects other than English. You use short structured writing tasks, on a regular basis, which have resulted in raising pupils' expectations for producing good-quality work. Pupils' progress in writing, especially for middle-attaining pupils, is improving. However, you acknowledge that there is room for more challenge for the most able across the school.
- Leaders and governors track pupils' progress very carefully and put personalised plans in place when pupils are falling behind. Support provided for pupils who need extra help is matched closely to their needs. Leaders' checks on teaching and learning are regular and feedback to teachers is thorough.
- Another line of enquiry that we agreed was in response to the trend over time of girls outperforming boys. You analysed this issue and have responded decisively by introducing a number of changes. You have resourced the library with books that appeal to all pupils, not just boys.
- Different, 'boy-friendly' topics have been introduced across the school, such as 'Time detectives', 'Airports', 'I'm alive' and 'Inventions and machines'. Reading material for boys to enjoy is used in the classes. The use of visual images, real-life experiences and film enables pupils, not just boys, to develop imagination and creative writing skills. Key stage 1 teachers use a variety of phonics resources to support learning styles, for example, outdoor learning, physical resources and high-quality texts. The positive impact of these measures is already clear to see in pupils' written work and in the standard of their reading. The assessment information confirms what the books show; that the gender difference is diminishing.

- Another line of enquiry was the issue of attendance in 2016. You have put in place a comprehensive plan to tackle attendance. Poor attendance and high levels of persistent absence last year relate to a relatively small number of pupils who have additional needs and whose frequent absences have an adverse effect on overall figures. Nevertheless, you take many opportunities to celebrate positive attendance by giving incentives and rewards to all pupils. At the same time, you work closely with families to overcome specific issues, including involving other agencies where needed. Your actions have resulted in improved attendance in this current year to date when compared with the same period last year.
- The progress of pupils who have special educational needs and/or disabilities and those who are disadvantaged was also a focus. Your records show that the staff know pupils very well and, as a result, the school's work for its more vulnerable pupils has been positive over time. The disadvantaged pupils in the school receive additional targeted support. The most able disadvantaged pupils are given work to challenge them further. Consequently, the vast majority of these pupils are making strong progress and the differences between their achievement and that of other pupils nationally is diminishing steadily. Leaders and governors make sure that good use is made of additional funding available to support learning. The school's work to support its most vulnerable pupils, including those who have special educational needs and/or disabilities, has been effective.

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

Leaders and those responsible for governance should ensure that:

- staff extend the challenge further for the most able pupils, especially in writing and mathematics
- the capacity of the middle leaders is developed so that they can systematically improve the quality of teaching in their subjects.

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

Yours sincerely

Terry Mortimer  
**Ofsted Inspector**

## **Information about the inspection**

During the inspection, both school sites were visited. Meetings were held with you and members of staff. The inspection also involved a meeting with the chair and vice-chair of the governing body and four other governors, and a telephone conversation with a representative from the local authority. There were 40 responses to Ofsted's online questionnaire, Parent View, and parents' views were sought when they brought their children to school. We took account of the 56 responses from the pupil online questionnaire and the 15 responses to the staff online questionnaire. We visited all the classrooms on one site together to observe pupils' learning and talk to them about it. We looked at the mathematics and English work of pupils with a range of abilities, especially middle- and higher ability pupils. We listened to three groups of pupils reading aloud. A wide range of documentation and information relating to your self-evaluation, school improvement planning, equalities, assessment, monitoring and evaluation, and safeguarding was also examined.