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Mr Roy Souter
Headteacher
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Dear Mr Souter

Short inspection of Stoke Hill Junior School

Following my visit to the school on 28 June 2017, 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 June 2013.

This school continues to be good.

The leadership team has maintained the good quality of education in the school since the last inspection. You have established a culture of high expectations for all. School is a happy place where pupils enjoy their learning and feel well cared for and supported by committed staff, who work well as a team. The strong emphasis you place on developing pupils' positive view of learning and good levels of resilience ensure that they have a 'can do' attitude, and tackle their work in lessons with enthusiasm. Federating with the Infant and Nursery school has allowed you to develop close working practices that support pupils' personal and academic development very well. These practices include those linked to safeguarding pupils, teaching and the promotion of a shared vision to 'Inspire, Discover and Succeed'. You have encouraged close working links with schools in the River Exe Learning Partnership that have facilitated good opportunities for staff to learn from each other. This sharing of best practice has secured improvements to teaching and pupils' learning.

Pupils enjoy their time at school and behave well. They focus very well in their lessons and work together in a mature way to agree a way forward, and to find solutions to problems. They complete tasks to the best of their ability. Pupils report that teachers 'teach us in a fun way' and 'make sure pupils understand their learning'. Pupils particularly enjoy the trips they are taken on, and their 'outdoor days' at school, which, they say, help them to think and learn in a different way. Parental comments such as 'pupils' curiosity, confidence and enjoyment of learning is a credit to the school' reflect the overwhelmingly positive view of the education their children are receiving.

You have successfully tackled the areas for improvement identified at the time of the last inspection. The introduction of planning days for year group teams has enabled the sharing of expertise and created a collective responsibility in pursuit of excellence. Teachers are making better use of assessment information to guide their planning. They are quick to modify what they teach so it addresses precisely what pupils need to learn next. Pupil achievement meetings have supported more responsive teaching that is securing good or better progress over time for pupils from different starting points. You have encouraged teachers to trial different approaches to improving their teaching, to share results and to adopt the most effective practice. This approach has resulted, for example, in more effective procedures for giving pupils feedback about their work and how it can be improved. Pupils' understanding of what they need to do to improve has quickened the pace of their learning. The expansion of the number and range of enrichment activities has worked well to 'hook pupils into learning'. Activities offer a good level of challenge for pupils of all abilities and their learning moves forward at a good rate.

Safeguarding is effective.

Everyone involved in the school community is very committed to keeping pupils safe. You and your governors have ensured that all safeguarding arrangements are fit for purpose and you make regular checks to ensure that the school's procedures are working well. A culture of vigilance has been created where everyone is very clear about their responsibilities, and what to do if they have a concern, no matter how small, about a pupil. You resolutely pursue concerns about pupils with other professionals and ensure that records are detailed and of high quality. Regular training, and updates during staff and governor meetings, keep everyone up to date with the most recent legislation. The education support worker makes a valuable contribution to keeping pupils safe through her face-to-face interaction with outside agencies and families. You are unwavering in your determination to secure pupils' good attendance, and in checking that pupils are safe when not at school.

The strong emphasis you place on pupils' personal development promotes the good friendships they establish and the strong sense of equality and inclusion that permeates the school. Pupils say they are helped to treat each other with respect, and this underpins the very positive relationships evident across the school. Pupils trust staff to listen to their concerns and to support them if necessary. The curriculum provides many opportunities for pupils to learn how to keep themselves safe. They are clear about the strategies they have been taught that help them to manage personal risk, and know how to use the internet and social media safely.

Inspection findings

- In 2016 the majority of the most able pupils, including the disadvantaged most able pupils, made good progress in reading and writing by Year 6. We agreed to explore the progress being made in reading and writing by pupils in the previously middle-attaining group, because not all of the pupils in this group had made enough progress. You have supported the English subject leader with the

introduction of a new reading programme across the school. Pupils are now reading more, and enjoying a much wider variety of books, which has meant they are experiencing a broader range of vocabulary. Pupils' understanding of the text is checked frequently and their comprehension skills have improved markedly this year. Pupils' progress has risen in all year groups this year. The proportion of disadvantaged pupils and other pupils in Year 6 who have reached the expected or higher standard this year is above the 2016 national figures for other pupils.

- Although not as marked as for reading, the progress made by middle-attaining pupils in writing has also improved. Teachers have focused on giving pupils a reason for writing, and have made good use of enrichment activities to motivate them to write. For example, having visited Wookey Hole and found it to be 'very spooky', pupils in Year 4 were able to write spells in the style of the three witches in 'Macbeth'. 'Wookey witch brew your spell, add some menace make it hell...' was typical of the good-quality work pupils produced in response to their first-hand experiences in the cave. Greater exposure to a variety of vocabulary through reading has helped pupils to use a wider range of words in their writing, so improving its quality and making it more interesting for the reader. Prompt and specific feedback from teachers ensures that pupils address errors in their use of grammar and punctuation swiftly. The proportion of disadvantaged pupils and other pupils in Year 6 who have reached the expected standard this year is above the national figure for other pupils in 2016. The proportion of other pupils reaching the higher standard is also above the national figure for other pupils, but it is lower for disadvantaged pupils.
- Next, we looked at the progress made by pupils who have special educational needs and/or disabilities. You have supported the special educational needs coordinator (SENCo) to implement the school's step-by-step approach. If, after support from their teacher, pupils continue to give cause for concern, the SENCo and members of staff who make up the inclusion team will consider a wide range of possible actions and decide on a way forward. A personalised programme to address pupils' specific needs is constructed, carried through and evaluated. Staff are quick to modify the support provided if pupils show little or no sign of improvement. 'If it isn't working stop doing it and try something else' is the responsive approach taken. This approach has lifted the progress made by pupils who have special educational needs and/or disabilities in all year groups. In Year 6 this year more pupils have made good or better progress from their starting points.
- Finally we looked at how the school is supporting disadvantaged pupils to make better progress in mathematics. You have supported the mathematics subject leader to introduce a number of initiatives that have contributed to pupils making much better progress this year. A computer-based mathematics programme has engaged pupils and motivated them to practise their mathematics computation skills. Lessons that focus tightly on ensuring that pupils learn key mathematical facts and methods, and are able to apply them quickly, have been very successful, with the result that pupils are now more competent and confident when solving mathematical problems. The profile of knowing your times tables has been raised and pupils have engaged enthusiastically, challenging themselves

to improve and celebrating each other's successes. Contributing to their success is the pupils' view that 'it is cool to know your tables'. Regular good-quality training for staff has ensured that their subject knowledge is good and their expectation of what pupils can achieve is high. This year, the proportion of disadvantaged pupils making good or better progress in Year 6 to attain the standard expected is above that secured by other pupils nationally in 2016. A few disadvantaged pupils, including the most able, have reached the higher level, although the proportion is lower than for other pupils nationally in 2016, and for other pupils at the school.

Next steps for the school

Leaders and those responsible for governance should ensure that across all year groups:

- assessment information and pupil achievement meetings focus further on how teaching can help disadvantaged pupils to make rapid progress, so that more reach the highest standard in writing and mathematics by the end of Year 6.

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,

Alison Cogher
Ofsted Inspector

Information about the inspection

During the inspection, I held meetings with you and your two assistant headteachers. Five members of the governing body, including the chair of governors, met with me to discuss actions taken since the last inspection and their plans for the school's future. I had a telephone conversation with a representative of the local authority. I looked at a range of documents and records relating to safeguarding, including how the school registers concerns about pupils, and vetting and recruitment procedures. The school's current self-evaluation information and the federation improvement plan were considered. I spoke to parents at the start of the school day, and gathered their views further through Ofsted's online questionnaire, Parent View. Responses to the staff and pupil questionnaire were also taken into account. I talked to pupils during lessons and at break and lunchtime. You and your assistant headteachers observed lessons with me in Years 4, 5 and 6. We also looked at information about pupils' progress and some pupils' written and mathematics work.