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Mr Shaun Watson  
Executive Headteacher  
Shepton Beauchamp Church of England Primary School  
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Dear Mr Watson

### **Short inspection of Shepton Beauchamp Church of England Primary School**

Following my visit to the school on 9 January 2018, 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 2014.

Based on the evidence available during this short inspection, I have identified some priorities for improvement which I advise the school to address. In light of these priorities, the school's next inspection will be a full section 5 inspection. **There is no change to the school's current overall effectiveness grade of good as a result of this inspection.**

Shepton Beauchamp Church of England Primary is part of the Three Saints Federation which also includes St Mary and St Peter's Primary, Ilminster. You work with a small core of teachers and staff, often between the two schools, with one governing body running both. The small size of the schools within the federation brings unique challenges to you and other leaders, in particular to continually refresh and improve the quality of teaching, learning and assessment within such a small setting. You successfully ensure that pupils attending Shepton Beauchamp are happy and enjoy positive relationships with staff. However, the inspection found that four out of nine staff feel the school has declined since the previous inspection and that 44% of parents do not feel that the school is well led and managed. The main reasons cited include poor communication and relationships with senior leaders.

Pupils are taught in two mixed-age classes. These include a Reception and key stage 1 class and a separate key stage 2 class. Due to the local system of education, many pupils leave the school at the end of Year 4 to attend a local middle school. During the inspection, we agreed that the school's next steps are to develop teaching and learning across the school to focus more precisely on pupils' key skills, especially in reading and to ensure that children in the Reception Year get off to a flying start. There are sometimes gaps in pupils' knowledge, understanding and skills which mean

that as they continue through the school, it is hard for them to make consistently strong progress to reach the standards of which they are capable. This is also true of the few disadvantaged and most-able pupils.

Since the last inspection, you have rightly focused on improving pupils' writing and there had been some positive impact and improvement following recent appointments. However, pupils' writing skills continue to require further focus, especially the quality and composition in terms of spelling, punctuation and grammar. Overall, there is a risk that without considered intervention and a rapid response, the issues from the last inspection may not be fully resolved by the time of the next section 5 inspection.

### **Safeguarding is effective.**

You and your staff rightly place safeguarding pupils at the heart of your work. All mandatory checks and arrangements to check the suitability of staff before they are employed are robust. Procedures for appointing and training staff meet requirements so that they know what to do in the event of any concerns that pupils may raise. Staff are vigilant and aware, contributing to a strong culture for safeguarding. Governors are also appropriately trained. You are proactive in working with external agencies to provide effective intervention and support for vulnerable pupils.

Pupils are happy and say they feel safe. They know what to do and how to behave in order to stay safe in different situations. For example, pupils told me they must be careful with personal information and understand why they should report suspicious behaviour when working online. Pupils mix happily and conduct themselves well around the school. They do not feel there is bullying and have confidence in staff to keep a watchful eye out for their well-being.

### **Inspection findings**

- My first line of enquiry focused on how effectively leaders hold others to account to improve teaching, learning and assessment. Leaders check teaching through visiting lessons and have also started to work more closely with other local primary schools to verify and moderate pupils' achievement. This is proving to be useful. However, leaders' monitoring often lacks precision. For example, it does not evaluate pupils' learning and progress closely enough. This slows the school's identification of weaknesses and as a result you and other leaders are not acting promptly to prevent pupils' progress stalling.
- Leaders' self-evaluation is overly generous. This means that leaders, including governors, do not have a clear understanding of what needs to be improved as a priority. As a result, action plans, including the school development plan, lack focus and are too broad. For example, the overarching statements relating to writing and mathematics do not provide sufficient depth or detail to drive improvement and monitor progress.
- Leaders do not evaluate the impact of some key strategies closely to adapt and modify plans according to their impact and effectiveness. On the one hand they have introduced a mathematics scheme which is having a positive benefit in

supporting teachers and providing a helpful frame for teaching. However, leaders have not analysed or closely evaluated the spending of the pupil premium grant and whether it is reaping the intended benefits for disadvantaged pupils. As a result, governors do not have a clear understanding of what is working for these pupils, or not.

- My second key line of enquiry explored how effectively the teaching of early reading and phonics is preparing pupils to be fluent and confident readers by the end of key stage 1. You ensure that pupils receive daily phonics teaching and have opportunities to practise their use of phonics. You also ensure that pupils, including children in the Reception Year, are provided with a reading book to take home and share with parents, who regularly provide useful feedback.
- Overall, however, the quality of the teaching of reading and phonics is not consistently good enough. Children in the Reception Year and across key stage 1 are not being well supported to quickly learn the letters and sounds expected of them. Weaknesses in articulation or blending sounds are not identified consistently and promptly by teachers and teaching assistants.
- Teachers and leaders do not have a rigorous system in place to assess reading and particularly pupils' skills and knowledge in segmenting to spell or blending phonemes to be able to read (and decode). Sometimes, pupils are provided with activities that do not match their needs and moved on to new content before they have fully grasped prerequisite and essential knowledge. For example, children in Reception were expected to sound out the word 'chip' before being able to read the 'i' with the correct sound.
- Leaders use a mixture of approaches, strategies and ideas to teach and assess phonics. These are confusing and do not support teachers well enough in gaining a clear understanding of the developmental sequence and order for pupils to learn about letters and sounds. This includes when pupils are in Years 1 and 2. Leaders do not have a clear rationale or agreed principles for the effective teaching of early reading and phonics.
- My third key line of enquiry evaluated how well teaching and provision in the early years foundation stage is supporting children to get off to a good start, especially in terms of essential reading, writing and mathematical development. This is because the outcomes for children have been consistently below the national average for a 'good level of development' in previous years, including 2017. Too few of the children exceed the early learning goals at the end of the Reception Year. This is an aspect of the school that you recognise has needed improvement. Indeed, you have been working well with the school's local authority adviser that has led to some recent improvements in the environment, particularly the outdoors. However, the effectiveness of this provision is not yet good enough.
- Leaders do not have a purpose or rationale for effective teaching, learning and assessment in the early years. As a result, there is limited understanding about how and why learning is structured, arranged or organised to get the best for the children. Staffs' use of assessment does not have enough impact on the children's ongoing learning and development.
- The physical environment has been recently tidied and arranged so that the

children have access to various areas to promote their interest and enthusiasm. For example, there are reading and role play areas with construction and art activities also available. However, these are not set up well or planned well enough to reflect the needs of the children. This limits high-quality opportunities for children to develop their learning and skills and slows their progress, for example in writing and mathematics. This also means that too many are not well enough prepared for key stage 1 and learning beyond.

- My fourth key line of enquiry focused on safeguarding and pupils' attendance. You work effectively with others, including the education welfare officer, to monitor pupils' attendance. You identify pupils who are at risk of low attendance and work with parents and families to tackle this. As a result, attendance is improving strongly and is just above the national average at this time. The attendance of vulnerable pupils is also improving, including those who have special educational needs (SEN) and/or disabilities and disadvantaged pupils. Furthermore, the number of pupils whose attendance is persistently low has fallen.

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

Leaders and those responsible for governance should ensure that:

- the teaching of reading and phonics is rapidly improved so that pupils are confident and fluent readers as quickly as possible and more pupils reach expected standards by the end of key stage 1
- teaching and provision in the early years foundation stage is improved in order that children can get a good start, especially in their reading, writing and mathematical development
- teachers use assessment effectively to plan lessons and learning to closely meet the needs of pupils.

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

Yours sincerely

Stewart Gale  
**Her Majesty's Inspector**

### **Information about the inspection**

We agreed the timetable and activities for the inspection. I worked extensively with you, including sampling pupils' books and evaluating pupils' progress together. I scrutinised safeguarding records and documentation related to the school's safeguarding arrangements, including staff recruitment, training and vetting

arrangements. I evaluated evidence to consider how you work with other agencies to keep children safe. Together, we visited all classes across the school. I also met with representatives of the governing body and reviewed school documents, including the school's self-evaluation summary and samples of governors' visits. I also held a telephone discussion with a local authority adviser. I took full account of the 44 responses on Parent View as well as other surveys, including free-texts received for the inspection, and spoke separately with parents. I also spoke with pupils throughout inspection activities. In addition, I took account of the nine responses to the staff survey to further evaluate aspects of the school's effectiveness.