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Dear Mrs Herbert

Short inspection of Clyst St Mary Primary School

Following my visit to the school on 27 February 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 gathered 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.**

Clyst St Mary Primary School is growing in pupil numbers, serving not only the local village and immediate area but also wider afield. Some parents opt to travel further to secure a school which they feel is the perfect match for their children. As a result, the school is due to expand further with a new building planned for the near future to meet the growing demand for places at the school.

Leaders and governors have a secure understanding about the school's strengths and weaknesses. They have successfully acted on areas of improvement identified at the last inspection. As a result, improvements in pupils' spelling and handwriting are evident. However, children who met the expected standard at the end of Reception have not made sufficient progress by the end of key stage 1 in mathematics. In addition, the most able pupils in key stage 2 are not being fully stretched and challenged to ensure that they make good progress in writing from their starting points. Leaders are aware that these areas are a priority for further improvement.

The governing body acts strategically to make sure that the school is well directed, now and for the future. When recruiting governors, the governing body conducts a

thorough needs analysis. Therefore, rather than just filling a vacancy, each new member brings a unique skillset. As a result, the governing body is increasingly effective.

Pupils across the school behave impeccably. They feel confident to discuss their learning with their peers and other adults and demonstrate positive attitudes. For example, pupils are enthusiastic when retelling how to adapt characters from a class book for their own version of the story. Furthermore, they are proud of the work they produce and demonstrate a keenness to share their experiences, indicating how much they enjoy coming to school. Parents and carers share the view that pupils enjoy coming to school. Absence rates are below national averages and persistent absence is well below.

You promote sports participation and engagement across the school. Activities are varied and support teachers in delivering high-quality lessons. They include links with the local rugby club, and investment in approaches which encourage pupils to engage with healthier lifestyle choices, ranging from healthy eating through to exercise. I spoke with a group of pupils who were avid supporters of the school's investment in sport and all of them could share how they had participated in a range of sporting activity in this academic year, from football to cross-country.

Safeguarding is effective.

Leaders ensure that safeguarding pupils is a priority across the school. From the moment potential employees register their interest in working at the school, you use an in-depth interview and recruitment process to ensure that only those suitable to work with children are employed. Once in post, staff receive a thorough induction and regular training, with the intention that each member of staff is an advocate for pupils' safety and welfare.

When concerns about a pupil do arise, staff are well informed and follow the school procedure for informing relevant leaders. Once leaders receive a concern, they act in a timely and effective manner and involve external agencies accordingly. Leaders can demonstrate how their actions have maintained pupil safety. There are occasions where leaders feel that external agencies have not acted on referrals. Where necessary, leaders will not relent until they feel that concerns have been considered and appropriate actions are in place.

School leaders take self-assessment processes seriously. They evaluate the school's safeguarding arrangements in an honest way. Where leaders identify improvements are needed, they act without delay. Furthermore, the school identifies risk management as a key element in maintaining pupils' safety. This is particularly so with the security of the premises and the school's proximity to the main road. Thorough risk assessments are therefore in place. Pupils described confidently how staff supervision and the high level of awareness maintain their safety.

Inspection findings

- At the beginning of the inspection, we agreed on the lines of enquiry. These included considering how the quality of teaching, learning and assessment in key stage 1 ensures strong progress in mathematics, particularly for middle-attaining pupils. Second, I explored how teachers support pupils across key stage 2, in particular higher-prior-attaining pupils, to make strong progress in writing. I also considered how leaders support pupils who have special educational needs (SEN) and/or disabilities across the school.
- In 2016, the proportion of pupils who left Reception working at expectations for their age, and also went on to meet expectations at the end of key stage 1, was below the national average in mathematics. In 2017, this was also the case. Leaders have placed improving the progress pupils make during key stage 1 on the school's improvement plan. Leaders acknowledge the need to improve outcomes for this particular group of pupils.
- Pupils' workbooks show that they have many opportunities to practise developing number skills and facts. Staff plan units of work with the intention of building skills over time and, for the majority of the books we looked at, this intention has been realised. There are, however, occasions where pupils are learning previous facts that they have already achieved, for example, counting in twos. As a result, it is not always clear how learning challenges pupils or meets their emerging needs. Furthermore, there are too few opportunities for pupils to use their reasoning skills or solve problems. This restricts their mathematical diet and in part explains why a lower proportion of pupils meet the expectations for their age by the end of key stage 1.
- To raise pupils' progress in mathematics, leaders have already adopted a new approach to how mathematics is taught in key stage 2. Early indications show that a focus on improving pupils' explanations in mathematics is having a positive impact. You recognise that this approach is now needed in key stage 1.
- In 2016, the proportion of higher-attaining pupils that reached the higher standard in writing was below national averages. This trend continued in 2017. Leaders state that the increased demands of the national curriculum have resulted in members of this group of pupils failing to reach the higher standards, including the current Year 5 and 6 cohort.
- Alongside school leaders, I looked at a range of pupils' workbooks and considered the school's assessment information. This showed that some higher-attaining pupils in Years 5 and 6 were not working at the higher standard. While pupils have opportunities to write across a range of genres, and engagement is strong, pupils have not developed the skills to support writing of a higher standard. There is a lack of challenge for these pupils and some activities promote quantity of writing rather than quality. Over time, leaders have been too slow to respond to heightened curriculum expectations, which resulted in weaker progress for this group of pupils in 2016 and 2017. Leaders acknowledge that this trend may continue for Years 5 and 6 pupils but have plans in place to improve outcomes for these pupils.
- However, in lower key stage 2, pupils are showing signs of maintaining strong

progress from the end of key stage 1. At the last inspection, spelling and handwriting were identified as areas for improvement. Teachers' efforts to improve these are evident in pupils' workbooks; the quality of pupils' writing attests to their success.

- In 2016 and 2017, pupils who have SEN and/or disabilities made stronger progress than their peers in reading and mathematics. In some cohorts, the proportion of pupils who have SEN and/or disabilities is high. Leaders have acknowledged that this is especially high in key stage 2. Leaders state that the school is recognised for its work to support these pupils. It has prompted more pupils to join the school at various points of their school journey.
- Plans to support pupils are of high quality and targets are achievable yet challenging, which results in pupils making strong progress. The special educational needs coordinator (SENCo) has an accurate overview of the performance of these pupils. She considers the most effective support for each pupil, whether human or practical, and monitors their progress regularly for impact. She is thoughtful when seeking support, not always satisfied with the convenient option, aiming to spend funding wisely and with pupils at the heart of every decision. Leaders regularly review the provision for these pupils and update targets to avoid progress stalling.
- While visiting classrooms, it is clear that leaders have made meaningful adjustments to the environment and to learning activities to promote access for all. Practice is interwoven seamlessly into the day-to-day life of the school. Furthermore, leaders aim to prepare pupils to become increasingly independent. This manifests itself in how leaders support pupils, both by whom and how often. Leaders design intricate timetables of support to promote progress and to demote dependency. Leaders acknowledge that processes for the early identification of pupils who have SEN and/or disabilities may need revising, especially for younger pupils, so that emerging needs are recognised and support is put in place swiftly.

Next steps for the school

Leaders and those responsible for governance should:

- ensure that higher-attaining pupils make strong progress across key stage 2 in writing so that more are working at the higher standard
- improve the mathematical curriculum across key stage 1, in particular for middle-attaining pupils, so that pupils develop their reasoning and problem-solving skills and more pupils work at expected levels for their age.

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

Nathan Kemp
Her Majesty's Inspector

Information about the inspection

During this inspection, I met with you and your deputy headteacher to discuss the school's performance since the last inspection, as well as current performance and the school's improvement plan. We observed lessons together and looked at a sample of pupils' workbooks. I spoke with members of the school's governing body and the current school improvement partner. I also met with a group of key stage 2 pupils.

I met with the leaders responsible for safeguarding across the school and I scrutinised various safeguarding records. These included logs of concerns about pupils, records relating to the suitability of staff to work with children and information about staff induction and training opportunities. I considered the school's safeguarding audit and subsequent actions. I also took account of five responses to the pupil survey, 12 responses to Ofsted's staff survey and 46 responses to the Parent View online survey.