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Mr Roy Sewell  
Headteacher  
West Moors, St Mary's Church of England First School and Nursery  
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West Moors  
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Dear Mr Sewell

### **Short inspection of West Moors, St Mary's Church of England First School and Nursery**

Following my visit to the school on 21 March 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 your predecessor school was judged to be good in March 2011.

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

The leadership team has maintained the good quality of education in the school since the last inspection. The school converted to academy status in December 2015 when it joined the Heath Multi-Academy Trust. Since that time, you have worked tirelessly and effectively with leaders of the school and trust to extend the learning experiences provided for pupils. This is especially evident in the breadth of outdoor learning and sporting activities provided for the pupils, which significantly enhance their confidence and attitudes towards learning.

St Mary's has several key strengths, most notably a strong Christian community ethos, which underpins the pupils' exemplary attitudes to learning. Your passionate promotion of the school motto 'Believe in better... be more awesome' is fully supported by staff and by the pupils themselves. This has established a positive learning atmosphere in all classes that securely supports the pupils' good progress and achievement.

Almost all the parents and carers who submitted responses to Ofsted's online questionnaire, Parent View, are highly satisfied with the school. The parents' written responses also express great appreciation of the school's caring and nurturing atmosphere. For example, one parent commented, 'There's a real community spirit. The positioning of "be more awesome" is something children, parents and teachers all understand.'

You and other leaders, including governors, sustain a relentless drive for improvement. Leaders across the school and the trust are fully involved in procedures to evaluate the performance of the school. Consequently, you hold an entirely accurate picture of where the strengths and less effective aspects of teaching and pupils' learning lie. Your subsequent development plans are equally well founded. Governors successfully hold you and other leaders to account for implementing these agreed plans and bringing about the desired improvement. This is evident, for example, in the successful way you are integrating the newly adopted Nursery with the Reception class to secure cohesive early years provision for the children. It is also seen in the positive steps you are taking to deepen pupils' understanding and increase their progress in mathematics. You rightly recognise that this action is bringing improvements, but remains work in progress.

### **Safeguarding is effective.**

Leaders have developed a strong and effective culture of safeguarding in the school and in the Nursery. Staff work diligently as a team to keep pupils safe and ensure that nurturing the well-being of each pupil lies at the heart of all their work. This is clearly evident in the happy and friendly demeanour of the pupils in school who told me that they feel very safe at all times. Leaders and administrative staff keep detailed records, which show that procedures for appointing and training staff are followed in full accordance with statutory requirements. Leaders and governors undertake stringent checks to make sure that agreed risk assessments and safeguarding policies and procedures are implemented effectively across the school. Leaders work well with a range of outside agencies to make sure that pupils and their families receive the right level of support at the time they need it most.

All the staff and pupils that I spoke to demonstrated a good knowledge of safeguarding practices and know how to keep all those who attend school safe. Staff know those pupils considered vulnerable and know how to spot any indicators of concern. Pupils know how to keep themselves and their friends safe, for example working online when using computers. Parents value the high-quality support that staff provide for their children. One parent wrote, typically representing the views of others, 'You know that the staff really do care about each and every child. Our daughter feels very safe and valued.'

### **Inspection findings**

- School and trust leaders have rightly identified the need to develop teaching and learning in mathematics so that pupils are enabled to achieve greater depth in their understanding. Your determined planned actions this academic year are bringing rapid improvement. You have provided the necessary training for staff to secure their ability to teach a new mathematics scheme effectively. This training and guidance have also helped to raise teachers' subject knowledge. As a result, teachers are providing more opportunities for pupils to work practically and solve problems, in line with the school approach. Teachers are placing more emphasis on developing pupils' ability to use and apply their mathematical knowledge. This is having a positive effect in all classes. Currently, pupils in Years 3 and 4 are

more frequently developing their ability to reason and solve problems than pupils in Years 1 and 2. You acknowledge that this reflects the relatively early stage of this approach to teaching mastery in mathematics. You recognise the need to sustain this emphasis to fully deepen pupils' understanding.

- You, other leaders and governors use additional funding effectively to support disadvantaged pupils. Your designation of the deputy headteacher as a 'pupil premium champion' has strengthened the emphasis on helping this group of pupils improve their progress. The deputy headteacher carefully evaluates the degree to which various actions increase pupils' achievements. For example, the innovative provision of a member of staff as a 'buddy' for each disadvantaged pupil sustains their confidence in learning. As a result, disadvantaged pupils are making faster progress, narrowing, and in some cases closing, differences between their attainment and that of other pupils nationally with the same starting points.
- Since the beginning of this academic year, governors with support from trust leaders have taken on the management of the previously privately run Nursery. You have updated and refurbished the indoor and immediate outdoor facilities so that the children have safe access to areas to promote their interest and enthusiasm. This extension of the school's early years provision is enabling staff in the Nursery and Reception classes to plan together to promote children's progress across the setting. Nursery staff are making more effective use of the school's comprehensive outdoor facilities to improve children's learning. For example, the children were observed exploring the school's nature area and responding eagerly to adults' probing questioning. These and other activities are currently helping to bridge gaps in children's speaking and listening skills. As a result, children are becoming better equipped to learn when they begin full-time schooling in the Reception class.
- The sharing of staff expertise and earlier assessment of children's learning are helping to enhance children's progress in Reception, for example in mathematics. Other actions, including strengthening the support for disadvantaged children, are also helping more children to achieve a good level of development by the end of the Reception Year. You rightly acknowledge that this improved and more collaborative teaching and learning needs to be sustained so that all children reach their potential.
- Leaders promote the value of good attendance well. You work diligently and effectively with parents and with outside agencies, including as necessary social services, to reduce absence and promote good attendance. You specifically identify and keep a careful check of pupils who have or may be at risk of low attendance. You work both rigorously and supportively with families of vulnerable pupils, including those who have special educational needs (SEN) and/or disabilities. This support, which, for example, includes assistance in attending breakfast club, is particularly effective and appreciated by parents. Due to your strong action to reduce persistent absence, pupils' attendance continues to improve and is now just above the national average.

## **Next steps for the school**

Leaders and those responsible for governance should:

- sustain the current focus on developing pupils' mastery of mathematics in all classes so that more pupils make the progress needed to help them reach higher standards by the time they leave the school
- ensure that staff build on the development of the school's widened early years provision to further improve the children's progress through this key stage.

I am copying this letter to the chair of the board of trustees and the chief executive officer of the multi-academy trust, the director of education for the Diocese of Salisbury, the regional schools commissioner and the director of children's services for Dorset. This letter will be published on the Ofsted website.

Yours sincerely

Alexander Baxter  
**Ofsted Inspector**

## **Information about the inspection**

During the inspection, I held meetings with you and the deputy headteacher and consulted with the other school staff who have leadership responsibilities. I met with the chief executive officer and the school evaluation partner of the multi-academy trust. I also met the school's external challenge partner and spoke with the chair of governors. I visited classrooms with you. We collected and scrutinised samples of pupils' work in books. I talked with individual pupils during visits to classrooms and listened to you hearing pupils read and talking to them about their reading. I observed lunchtime arrangements and talked with pupils and support staff. In addition, I examined a range of documents relating to safeguarding, pupils' attendance, pupils' progress and the school's self-evaluation and development. I took account of 35 responses to the Ofsted online Parent View survey and 35 additional written comments from parents. I also took account of 11 questionnaire responses from staff and one from a pupil.