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4 May 2018

Mr Stephen Heath
Executive Headteacher
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Dear Mr Heath

Short inspection of Croscombe Church of England Primary School

Following my visit to the school on 17 April 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 2015.

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.**

Croscombe Church of England Primary is federated with Stoke St Michael School in Radstock. The small size of the two schools, recent staff changes and the resulting reassignment of leadership roles present a particular challenge for you, leaders and governors. Managing these changes has slowed the implementation of plans to secure ongoing improvements in the quality of teaching and pupils' outcomes. Staffing is now more settled and you have renewed the focus on raising expectations to ensure that pupils achieve well. Staff morale is positive and teamwork is strengthening. Most parents and carers express their confidence in the school, identifying strengths in the pastoral care that staff provide and the school's 'family feel'.

For some years, the proportion of children in the Reception Year who reach a good level of development has compared well with the national average. Similarly, pupils in Years 1 and 2 typically make good progress to achieve at least the expected standard in reading, writing and mathematics.

In 2017, pupils in Year 6 achieved well in reading, but the progress made by many in writing and mathematics was much lower than the national average. In addition, the proportion of pupils achieving the expected standard in all three of the subjects

of reading, writing and mathematics was below the national average. The progress made by pupils in Years 3 to 6 has, too often, been inconsistent and too slow in writing and mathematics.

You have introduced new assessment procedures for all year groups that are identifying gaps in pupils' knowledge and skills, and challenging teachers to address these quickly. There is a sharper focus on setting challenging targets, identifying how far you expect pupils to have progressed by set times in the year. It is too soon to evaluate the full impact of these procedures on pupils' progress over time, as they are not yet fully embedded in whole-school practice.

You have promoted closer working practices with Stoke St Michael School, and with schools in a local learning partnership. These links are providing teachers with more opportunities for valuable professional development. You have focused on ensuring that teachers have a good understanding of curriculum expectations and on improving the accuracy of their assessments.

Since the previous inspection, you have challenged teachers to ensure that activities motivate pupils, and to adjust tasks during lessons to speed up pupils' progress. Pupils told me that they enjoy their lessons and that adults help them to improve. We observed pupils working hard in lessons, sustaining concentration and responding positively to advice and support provided by adults. However, we identified that some marked inconsistencies remain in the progress pupils make in key stage 2, particularly in writing and mathematics.

Pupils told me that they like being at school. They feel supported by teachers and other adults, who help them with their learning and 'comfort' them when they experience personal difficulties. There is some variance in the views expressed by parents, but most express confidence in the school and would recommend it to other parents.

Safeguarding is effective.

Leaders and governors ensure that all safeguarding arrangements are fit for purpose. Effective action is taken to safeguard pupils. Your records are thorough and of good quality. Staff take the time to get to know pupils well and this supports a strong culture of safeguarding in the school. Checks on staff and visitors are completed effectively and staff training is updated in a timely way. You work well with other agencies, monitoring pupils closely and making referrals promptly when the need arises.

Pupils told me they are well looked after at school and feel very safe. If they have a worry, they feel able to talk to an adult and are confident they would be supported to resolve it. You teach pupils how to manage personal risk, including when they use social media. 'Don't talk to or arrange to meet people you don't know, they could be anyone,' was the sensible advice they shared with me.

The vast majority of parents consider their children are safe at school. A number

expressed their appreciation for the support they and their children have received when experiencing challenging family circumstances. You have high expectations of pupils' behaviour and strongly promote tolerance and respect for all. This approach supports pupils' typically good behaviour, and the strong bonds of friendship they develop and value.

Inspection findings

- The first line of enquiry considered whether teaching in Years 3 to 6 ensures that pupils who have different starting points make good or better progress in writing and mathematics. This year, working with teachers, you have collated assessment information to provide a more detailed and accurate picture of pupils' knowledge, skills and understanding. You now know which pupils are at risk of falling behind in reading, writing or mathematics. Teachers are increasingly using this information well to plan targeted support for those pupils who need to catch up quickly. These actions are beginning to improve the progress made by some pupils. However, the proportion of pupils achieving the expected or higher standard for their age in each of reading, writing and mathematics remains variable between year groups.
- Pupils are starting to build confidently on their mathematical skills and knowledge. Increasingly, teaching is focusing closely on ensuring that pupils' understanding of numbers is secure and that they complete calculations accurately. Teachers encourage pupils to consider a variety of approaches to tackling problems, which is helping pupils to develop a greater confidence and mathematical understanding.
- Pupils have not always been able to demonstrate in their writing that they are meeting, or able to exceed, the expectations for their year group. This year, staff are paying closer attention to the accuracy of spelling and the use of grammar and punctuation. This is helping pupils to improve the overall standard of their written work. Pupils enjoy writing in English lessons and across the curriculum and work hard to engage the reader. They respond well to the challenge to improve their writing by, for example, adding alliterative adjectives.
- My second line of enquiry focused on how well leaders, including governors, secure school improvement. Until recently, governors have not had the experience and knowledge to enable them to hold leaders to account for the standards achieved. They have been resolute in their determination to embrace training opportunities and have swiftly introduced sharper working practices. They now have a good understanding of their roles and responsibilities and are well placed to monitor the school's work. However, they have not ensured that the school's website meets requirements so that parents have access to all the information they need.
- Some members of the leadership team are new to their role this year. You, other senior leaders and governors have focused on securing strategic and sustainable approaches to school improvement. You have embarked on providing training for middle leaders so they develop the leadership skills they need to carry out their roles effectively. However, subject leaders are not fully contributing to the school's drive for rapid whole-school improvement in English and mathematics.

Next steps for the school

Leaders and those responsible for governance should ensure that:

- middle leaders strengthen their leadership skills so that they can contribute fully to improving teaching and pupils' outcomes in English and mathematics
- teachers use assessment information better to guide their planning for pupils of different abilities in all year groups
- more pupils, particularly in Years 3 to 6, make good progress in writing and mathematics
- more pupils, in all year groups, achieve at least the expected standard for their age in each of the subjects of reading, writing and mathematics
- the school's website complies fully with requirements.

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

Alison Cogher
Ofsted Inspector

Information about the inspection

At the start of the inspection, we agreed the lines of enquiry and the activities we would carry out. I worked extensively with you, including observing pupils' learning in each classroom, sampling pupils' books and evaluating their progress. I spoke with pupils during lessons and at breaktime and lunchtime. I met with five members of the governing body, including the chair, and reviewed school documents, including the school's self-evaluation summary and plans for improvement. I had a telephone conversation with a representative of the local authority. I scrutinised safeguarding records, including staff recruitment, and training and vetting arrangements. I spoke with parents as they dropped their children off at school and gathered their views further through the school's recently conducted questionnaire, and Ofsted's online questionnaire, Parent View. I also considered responses to the staff and pupil questionnaires.