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Mrs A Trickey
Headteacher
St Thomas à Becket Church of England Aided Primary School
Tilshead
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Dear Mrs Trickey

Short inspection of St Thomas à Becket Church of England Aided Primary School

Following my visit to the school on 22 June 2016, 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 March 2011.

This school continues to be good.

The leadership team has maintained the good quality of education in the school since the previous inspection. St Thomas à Becket is a very small school with a big heart. You have placed a strong focus on the development of pupils' respect and understanding of the heritage and beliefs of others, while maintaining the school's Christian ethos. As a result, it is all right to be different at this school; bullying is rare, and attendance high. Pupils told me that they treat each other as though they were brothers and sisters. Parents, staff and governors also feel part of one big happy family.

In March 2011, the school was asked to improve pupils' learning and to refine the curriculum. Pupils are now given sufficient time to reflect on their own learning and know the success criteria for each piece of work or unit of study. Pupils' learning journals and home diaries are also now being used more effectively. The way that staff guide pupils as to how to improve their work has improved. However, the way it is recorded is less consistent. Pupils have an interesting and stimulating curriculum that enables them to progressively acquire skills through the school. This is effectively supported by a range of after-school clubs such as drama, music, cookery, gardening and sports, visits to places of interest and visitors.

Governors visit the school regularly. Acting as governor of the month, each gets to know staff and pupils well. They use first-hand evidence to monitor and check the information that you and other school staff share with them. They ensure that pupils are well prepared for life in modern Britain. However, the governing body needs to ensure that the school's website and policies contain all the information required by the Department for Education.

Being such a small school, cohort sizes and the number of girls and boys vary significantly between different year groups, where one pupil may represent 25%. This variation also applies to pupils identified as having special educational needs and/or disabilities, and pupils from service families. As in previous years, a much higher than average proportion of children who completed Reception achieved a good level of development in 2015. The proportion of pupils who reach the expected standard in the national phonics (the sounds letters make) check at the end of Year 1 remains above that seen nationally. Pupils' attainment in reading, writing and mathematics at the end of Year 2 and Year 6 is at, or above, that of their peers nationally. Pupils, regardless of background, gender and ability, typically make good progress during their time in school. Those pupils identified as having special educational needs and/or disabilities are extremely well supported so that they make good or better progress from their relative starting points.

Safeguarding is effective.

You, the staff and the governing body have created a strong safeguarding culture. Pupils feel safe, are kept safe and know how to keep themselves safe. For example, they know what to do to protect themselves when using the internet. All safeguarding documents, processes and procedures are fit for purpose. Vetting procedures for new staff and governors are rigorous. All staff and governors get regular and appropriate training. For example, staff have been given training on female genital mutilation, and know the signs to look out for. You and the governing body ensure that everyone is kept up to date with any changes to legislation or government guidance. Attendance is monitored effectively and absences are followed up. You ensure that pupils are kept safe from the risks of radicalisation, extremism and child sexual exploitation.

Inspection findings

- Relationships throughout the school are based on respect, trust and kindness. Staff continually strive to ensure that the best teaching is spread effectively by sharing ideas and working as a team. The school is working with other schools as part of the Broadwell Collaboration to build on best practice and share resources.
- Very recently, several new governors have been appointed. They are currently undertaking appropriate training to equip them for their new roles and responsibilities.
- You regularly monitor and review pupils' work and the quality of teaching. Where improvements need to be made, you identify them as a whole-staff team and make amendments. For example, following the staff meeting in

February, it was decided that handwriting and the quality of presentation in pupils' books needed to be improved. Staff are working hard to ensure that these aspects continue to improve.

- Pupils and adults in the school celebrate their differences. The school is a warm and welcoming community.
- Pupils have a good knowledge of different faiths and cultures, but say they would like more opportunities to meet, or be pen pals, with children from different backgrounds.
- The school promotes the development of pupils' spiritual, moral, social and cultural understanding very well. This is clearly seen through their reflections in their 'collective worship journals'. In addition, pupils enjoy making models as part of design and technology, and using computers to control things. Pupils' development of literacy skills is well supported by their work in other subjects such as religious education. The most able pupils are encouraged to write their own novels.
- Pupils enjoy their topic work. However, teachers need to ensure that the planned activities are suitably challenging so that pupils are working to the highest standard.
- Since the previous inspection, a range of activities have been introduced to support pupils' interest in and love of reading. These include authors' visits, a bedtime story evening, poster competitions, library improvements and reading challenges
- You are ensuring that teachers are following the new ways of teaching mathematics. Staff make sure that pupils have securely grasped the four mathematical rules and that these are securely embedded before moving them on. However, sometimes this means that the most able are not given work that is suitably challenging for them soon enough.
- Following the closure of the private village nursery, you have started a pre-school class within the school. This is much appreciated by the families using it. The children in the Nursery are being well prepared to join the main school and take part in whole-school activities.
- This year the number of children from military families has almost doubled compared with that previously seen. You, and the school governors, understand extremely well the different experiences and possible challenges these families face. Staff ensure that these, and other new pupils, are supported to quickly integrate into school life. As a result, these pupils make equally good progress as their classmates.
- The acoustics in the Reception and Year 1 classroom are poor. When there are two groups working in the room, one upstairs on the mezzanine floor and the other downstairs, the sound transmits and hinders pupils' learning of phonics. This is because, although the teacher enunciates the letters very well, it is hard for the pupils to hear the correct pronunciation as it gets muffled.

Next steps for the school

Leaders and those responsible for governance should ensure that:

- the acoustics in the Reception and Year 1 classroom are improved, so that

- pupils can hear the correct pronunciation for their phonics work
- teachers plan topic work, based on what pupils already know and understand to ensure that work is sufficiently challenging
- pupils, particularly the most able, have more opportunities to solve increasingly complex mathematical problems
- the school's website and policies contain all the information required by the Department for Education.

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

Yours sincerely

Steffi Penny
Her Majesty's Inspector

Information about the inspection

During this inspection, I met with you, other school leaders, members of the governing body and pupils. Together, we observed pupils' learning, including a phonics group. I scrutinised the quality of pupils' work. I watched pupils at play and at lunchtime. I took account of the responses to staff and pupil surveys, and those by parents to Ofsted's online questionnaire, Parent View.

A wide range of documentary evidence was considered, including records relating to safeguarding, the impact of teaching on learning and assessment information.