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Duncan Baxter
Headteacher
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Dear Mr Baxter

Short inspection of Spetisbury CofE VA Primary School

Following my visit to the school on 21 February 2017, 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 predecessor school was judged to be good in May 2014.

This school continues to be good.

The leadership team has maintained the good quality of education in the school since the last inspection. You have worked in an open, collegiate way with staff, governors and other headteachers in the multi-academy trust to bring about improvements. When you were appointed a year and a half ago you were quick to identify the key areas for development. As a result, and working effectively through other staff, you have taken swift and decisive action to tackle these issues. You recognise the importance of nurturing the leadership potential of others. Consequently, middle leaders now exercise greater responsibility and take ownership of their work. This is having a positive impact on the quality of teaching and learning across the range of curriculum subjects.

You have been well supported by governors, who have helped you to take difficult decisions in the best interests of the school. Governors are highly committed in their support for the school. They take their roles seriously and have become more proactive since your appointment. This is because you have encouraged them to hold school leaders to greater account over teaching and learning, and pupils' outcomes. Governors are now more involved in monitoring the quality of teaching and asking the right questions of leaders to ensure that high standards are upheld.

You and other staff also receive strong external support from the multi-academy trust of which the school is a part. This is because you have forged an open, trusting relationship with the other headteachers in the organisation. As a result,

leaders take a candid, honest view of each school's weaknesses and collectively take the most appropriate action to tackle them.

Leaders' high expectations are shared by all staff in the school. As a result, the quality of teaching is improving. Teachers are becoming more confident in their use of the school's assessment system and the recently introduced national curriculum. Consequently, pupils are able to take full advantage of teachers' good subject knowledge and expertise. Furthermore, highly skilled teaching assistants are used well to provide additional support to meet the needs of specific pupils. As a result, pupils achieve well in the school because work is matched to their abilities and they find tasks interesting. They want to know more and enjoy their learning.

The high expectations of staff and the school's culture help to promote good behaviour. The school's culture is informed by its religious ethos and the values that are threaded through all aspects of its work. Pupils are tolerant and respectful of each other. They move around the school in an orderly way and demonstrate good attitudes to learning in lessons. Pupils who spoke to me were confident and willing to share their views.

At the beginning of the inspection, we agreed on the key lines of enquiry to be considered during the day. These included establishing the effectiveness of actions taken to improve achievement in writing at key stage 2, particularly for pupils with middle prior attainment. We also considered the effectiveness of actions to enable pupils of different abilities to achieve at greater depth at key stage 1. Furthermore, we considered to what extent absence is being reduced for different groups of pupils and whether safeguarding is effective. These lines of enquiry are considered below.

Safeguarding is effective.

Safeguarding is taken seriously at the school. Staff are vigilant; they pay attention to pupils' behaviour and presentation so that they are quickly alerted should there be any underlying concerns. All staff have received appropriate child protection training and know the procedures for making referrals should they have concerns. Staff are encouraged to make referrals using the new easy-to-use system, however small they might consider the issue being referred. Senior staff are made aware of every logged referral so that they can take appropriate action.

The school has benefited from being part of the multi-academy trust in respect of safeguarding. An annual safeguarding review takes place in all the schools to ensure that procedures are in place and continue to be fit for purpose. Staff have also received good-quality training from other staff within the trust on issues such as the government's 'Prevent' duty, which aims to counter radicalisation.

Pupils who spoke to me reported that they feel safe in school. One pupil said, 'There's always someone you can go to.' Pupils mentioned that there was a high level of staff supervision at breaktimes and that the new site fencing made them feel more secure. Another pupil told me about 'jigsaw club', a safe space where

pupils can go if they are worried about anything. A member of staff is on hand to advise pupils about possible solutions to problems. Pupils also know how to keep themselves safe online. They were able to tell me why it was important to 'zip-it' (do not talk to strangers), 'block-it' (block unkind comments) and 'flag-it' (tell an adult if someone says something unkind online).

Inspection findings

- Leaders have prioritised the development of pupils' writing skills throughout the school, particularly for boys. As a result, changes have been made to the curriculum to increase pupil engagement and inspire pupils to write with enthusiasm. For example, new topics have been introduced, such as the Aztecs and volcanoes. More opportunities have been provided for pupils to write for different audiences and purposes, and in different contexts. For example, the books of Year 6 pupils show that they consider discursive questions, such as 'Should dogs be banned from parks?' Moreover, leaders have emphasised the need to develop pupils' technical skills at the same time. These approaches are enabling pupils to develop greater discipline and confidence in their writing.
- Pupils of different abilities are well supported to make good progress in their writing and other subjects. This is because teachers and teaching assistants use their expertise to question pupils effectively in line with their level of understanding. They also set tasks and provide resources that are matched to pupils' needs. For example, the most able pupils are encouraged to take advantage of extension activities which challenge them further. All pupils are given opportunities to identify their mistakes and redraft their work to make it better.
- You are successfully working with teachers to ensure that they accurately and robustly monitor the progress pupils make from their starting points. Teachers are becoming increasingly confident in the use of the school's new assessment system and, as a result, they recognise more readily when key stage 1 pupils achieve at greater depth. This is also because of the more frequent moderation that takes place. Staff not only moderate internally but also with colleagues from schools in the multi-academy trust and other local schools.
- The attendance of pupils overall is above average in the current academic year and has been in line with or above average over time. However, the attendance of disadvantaged pupils has been below average over time and, in the case of a minority of pupils, continues to be stubbornly low. Leaders clearly articulate to parents that good attendance is crucial to good learning. Nevertheless, not enough is currently being done to improve the attendance of a minority of disadvantaged pupils.
- Leaders acknowledge the importance of establishing a strong relationship with parents and have, for the most part, been successful. The school has an 'open-door' policy whereby parents are encouraged to come in and speak to staff if they want to discuss anything. The headteacher is available to meet parents on the school gate on most mornings and he is beginning to hold parent forums on key school issues. However, a minority of parents who responded to the Parent View survey are not satisfied with some aspects of the school's work.

Next steps for the school

Leaders and those responsible for governance should ensure that:

- further action is taken to reduce the absence of the small number of pupils who are persistently absent
- action is taken to engage all parents in the work of the school, including those who are currently not fully satisfied.

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 Dorset. This letter will be published on the Ofsted website.

Yours sincerely

Steve Smith
Her Majesty's Inspector

Information about the inspection

During this inspection, I spoke to you and the deputy lead for safeguarding. I also spoke to pupils, representatives of the governing body and the chief executive of the multi-academy trust.

You and I made visits to lessons to observe pupils' attitudes to learning. We also scrutinised the work in pupils' books.

A range of documentary evidence was considered, which included the school's self-evaluation, the school improvement plan and attendance information. I also considered governing body meeting minutes and monitoring reports. In addition, I scrutinised information about the suitability of staff to work with children and records for children looked after.

I took account of 38 responses to the Parent View online survey, 15 responses to the pupil survey and two responses to the staff survey. I also took account of a letter received from a parent during the inspection.