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Mrs Sarah Lafferty-Jenkins
Headteacher
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Dear Mrs Lafferty-Jenkins

Short inspection of Stalbridge Church of England Primary School

Following my visit to the school on 28 March 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 school was judged to be good in September 2012.

This school continues to be good.

The leadership team has maintained the good quality of education in the school since the last inspection. Following your appointment in June 2015, you quickly gained the respect of the school community and set about getting to know the strengths and weaknesses of the school intricately. You share a strong vision of the school with other staff, governors and pupils and do not accept second best. This can be seen in the ways that you hold staff to account. You also ensure that professional development and training is closely matched to the needs of the staff so that they can develop their skills and improve their practice to meet your expectations.

You work effectively with governors in leading the school. School improvement plans reflect the right priorities for improvement and are fit for purpose. In addition, the appointment of the deputy headteacher in September 2016 is adding further capacity to the school's leadership as well as playing an integral role in providing high-quality teaching.

This is a happy school where pupils learn, play and mix well. Pupils take an active role in the school, for example through the school council and eco-council, and their views are valued by staff. You ensure that pupils are respected and trusted. Pupils

are proud of the school and reflect the school's values through their general behaviour and conduct throughout the day.

You have responded positively to the findings of the last inspection and since then have been effective in improving teaching, although this is still on a journey towards outstanding. You check the quality of teaching and support teachers in their understanding of how to secure rapid progress for pupils. For example, you are currently working with teachers on improving their use of assessment information so that teachers provide opportunities which are matched to the pupils' needs. However, there are still some inconsistencies in the effectiveness of teaching in each key stage. This can stall the progress of some pupils in these year groups. You have rightly identified this and are taking effective action to remedy it.

Furthermore, throughout the inspection we considered the importance of pupils being able to use the full breadth of the curriculum to develop their writing, number and problem-solving skills. Teachers' expectations of pupils' work and standards are not always consistent in subjects other than English and mathematics, as seen in their humanities, science and religious education (RE) workbooks. This is also important in increasing the proportion of the most able pupils working at the higher standards (greater depth) across the school.

Safeguarding is effective.

You and other leaders are diligent and conscientious in your safeguarding duties and care towards the children. As a result, children are kept safe and are well cared for.

The leadership team ensures that all safeguarding arrangements are fit for purpose and records are of a high quality. Pre-employment checks and vetting arrangements are robust. Beyond this, there is also a strong culture of safeguarding. Staff know what to do in keeping children safe. They take decisive and effective action, when needed, to report or escalate any concerns. There are examples when the actions of staff have led to rapid intervention with other professional agencies, including social services. In other instances, school staff have been proactive in reporting concerns quickly to the local authority so that children do not go missing from education.

Pupils feel safe and have confidence in the staff. You ensure that pupils know they can talk to staff, including four trained safeguarding leaders. Pupils told me how they manage risks for themselves to stay safe, for example around the use of the swimming pool and in keeping safe online. Governors are proactive and have taken immediate action following the local authority audit in February 2017. They are wisely reviewing the site security to install higher fences to the school's perimeter. However, although there is a firm policy and flow diagram for whistleblowing, we

discussed the need to revisit this with staff to ensure absolute clarity and understanding.

Inspection findings

- My first key line of enquiry focused on the school's actions to ensure that improvements in pupils' outcomes at the end of key stage 2 can be sustained and built on, including how well the wider curriculum can support this. Standards over time have been improving and in 2016 national tests pupils typically made strong progress to leave the school at a level at least similar to the national average in reading and above in writing and mathematics. You know the strengths and weaknesses in the teaching well. You are taking effective action to tackle those year groups or subjects where teaching does not yet meet your expectations.
- The outstanding practice of the deputy headteacher is instrumental in raising pupils' outcomes and providing high-quality professional guidance for other teachers in the key stage. However, you are aware that teachers' expectations in subjects other than English and mathematics are not as high. This limits the opportunities for pupils to transfer and apply their skills in writing and mathematics in a wide variety of contexts to the highest standards, particularly for the most able pupils.
- My second key line of enquiry focused on the effectiveness of teaching to improve outcomes for groups of pupils in key stage 1, particularly the middle-attaining and the most able pupils. Teaching in the key stage has particular strengths to ensure rapid progress in Year 2, and this is beneficial for these groups of pupils. However, pupils do not always build most effectively on their skills, knowledge and understanding when they leave the Reception Year, which causes their progress to stall. You have rightly identified this and are now ensuring that teachers 'track back' and use assessment information to provide opportunities to support pupils if they are in danger of falling behind. However, this is still a key aspect for development in the school's plans, in particular in ensuring that the most able pupils can attain the highest standards (greater depth) at the end of key stage 1.
- My third key line of enquiry focused on what leaders are doing to improve the attendance of some pupils, in particular those who have special educational needs and/or disabilities, as well as those who have persistently high absence. You are working effectively with a range of professional services and parents to support these pupils. The school has a unique set of circumstances for pupils who have significant medical needs. You rightly check the attendance of pupils and are keen to be proactive in supporting families who have complex situations. For example, staff have delivered tuition at home when needed and you have introduced timely and effective part-time timetables to re-integrate pupils as quickly as possible. Overall attendance is improving and is above the national average, including for disadvantaged pupils. However, you agree that this is an area for continued monitoring for those who have special educational needs and/or disabilities. The proportion of pupils with high absence is declining.

My fourth line of enquiry focused on safeguarding, which is reported on previously in the letter.

Next steps for the school

Leaders and those responsible for governance should ensure that:

- teaching continues to build rapidly on existing strengths in key stages 1 and 2
- the highest expectations are consistent across the curriculum to accelerate pupils' writing, number and problem-solving skills
- the proportion of most-able pupils working at the highest standards (greater depth) increases across the school.

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

Stewart Gale
Her Majesty's Inspector

Information about the inspection

I met with you to agree the timetable and inspection activities for the day. I also worked extensively with you across the whole day. I met with the deputy headteacher, special educational needs coordinator and mathematics subject leader. I scrutinised safeguarding records and discussed a wide range of matters related to safeguarding, including staff recruitment and vetting procedures and recent audits, and reviewed evidence for reporting children missing from education. Together, we visited lessons in key stages 1 and 2 to evaluate the effectiveness of provision. This involved scrutinising a wide range of books and talking with different pupils in line with our agreed key lines of enquiry. I also met with four representatives of the governing body and reviewed school documents, including the school's self-evaluation summary and samples of governors' visits. I also spoke with Year 6 pupils and heard Year 2 and 6 pupils read. I sought a range of views about safeguarding arrangements across the spectrum of inspection activities. Furthermore, I took full account of the 28 responses to Parent View and the 31 responses made by pupils, as well as the further 27 free-text responses received for the inspection.