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Mrs Gudrun Osborn
Head of School
Oare Church of England Primary School
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Dear Mrs Osborn

Short inspection of Oare Church of England Primary School

Following my visit to the school on 13 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 February 2011.

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.**

Since you were appointed as head of school in September 2017, you have made significant improvements to the quality of teaching, learning and assessment at this small village school. Your predecessor, who is now the executive headteacher, established many basic systems and so stabilised the school following a period of turbulence in leadership.

You have raised teachers' expectations of the quality of pupils' work and you have introduced several initiatives to bring greater creativity into the curriculum. Pupils have responded well to these initiatives. Many examples of high-quality artwork and creative writing are on display around the school. Staff morale is rising because you are providing clear leadership and direction. Parents and carers express confidence in you and your staff. One comment represented the views of several parents: 'There is a strong, committed and enthusiastic team who have reenergised the school.'

Pupils appreciate the improvements in behaviour that have taken place over the last two years. They work well together in mixed-age classes and enjoy a variety of extra-curricular activities, such as the choir and the gymnastics club. You recognise that pupils' progress was not strong enough last year. While pupils' progress in

reading was around the national average, pupils' progress in writing and in mathematics was below average.

The proportion of children who reach a good level of development by the end of Reception Year has risen for two consecutive years and is now in line with other schools nationally. The indoor and outdoor areas are interesting and inviting for children to explore. You provide a good range of activities for children to choose from, as the previous inspection suggested you should. For example, 'Cold Blow Castle', in the outdoor area, fires children's imaginations.

You have responded to a fall in key stage 2 pupils' progress in writing by introducing more opportunities for them to write and so practise their skills. Current pupils are making much better progress in writing; however, some technical aspects of their writing are still not strong enough. In recent years, mathematics teaching across the school has not enabled pupils to make sufficient progress. You are acutely aware of this and your efforts to improve teaching in this subject are beginning to hit home, but this is still an area that requires further improvement. Year 1 pupils' performance in the phonics screening check has declined since 2015 and is below average. You are taking urgent action to reverse this trend for pupils currently in the school because you recognise that their phonic knowledge is not yet secure.

Safeguarding is effective.

You have ensured that all safeguarding arrangements at the school are fit for purpose and records are detailed and of high quality. Appropriate checks are made when staff are appointed to work at the school or when new governors or volunteers join. You make sure that regular training and information updates are provided for your staff and so a culture of vigilance is maintained. Referrals to outside agencies because of particular concerns about pupils are very rare, but you document them well when they are necessary.

Without exception, the parents who responded to the Parent View survey agree that their children are happy at school, are well looked after and are kept safe. Pupils confirm this view. Pupils of all ages say that they feel safe at school and their teachers care for them well. They say that bullying is rare. Pupils support each other well and this contributes to their improving progress.

Inspection findings

- Teachers' assessments of pupils' attainment are now accurate as a result of training and frequent moderation exercises to check that teachers' judgements are consistent. Senior leaders and governors now have a clear view of the performance of the school and so base their improvement strategies on firm evidence. The Excalibur Academies Trust provides strong support for the school. This support underwrites the improvements that are taking place and gives staff confidence for the future.

- To decide whether the school remained good, the first line of enquiry focused on Year 5 and Year 6 pupils' progress in writing. In 2017, key stage 2 pupils' progress in writing was not strong and so a smaller proportion attained the expected standard by the end of Year 6 than seen nationally. Senior leaders have ensured that teachers' planning now includes activities which give pupils experience of writing in a wider variety of genres. Teaching uses imaginative classroom displays well to enthuse pupils and encourage their creativity. As a result, pupils are motivated to write extended pieces of work. The school's assessments show that a much higher proportion of Year 6 pupils are on track to reach the expected standard by the end of this year. However, some pupils' spelling, punctuation and grammar do not yet match the standard of their creative ideas.
- The second line of enquiry centred on the effectiveness of mathematics teaching. For the past two years, key stage 2 pupils' progress in mathematics has been well below average. By introducing a clearly defined curriculum, and expecting teachers to fit their planning more closely to pupils' prior attainment, senior leaders have begun to address this issue. Mathematics teaching is now more effective. Pupils are being challenged to make better progress, but some inconsistencies remain. For example, the new calculation policy is not being routinely applied in all classrooms. Teachers are setting regular homework tasks to complement the raised level of challenge in lessons.
- Senior leaders have begun to help parents understand the new mathematics curriculum so they can support their children. This initiative has successfully covered some aspects of the curriculum, but more areas remain to be explored. As a result of previous weaker teaching, some pupils are not confident in using the four basic operations of addition, subtraction, multiplication and division. This hinders them when they are asked to solve more complicated problems and explain their reasoning.
- A final line of enquiry looked at phonics teaching in key stage 1. Pupils' reading development has been hindered in recent years because of a lack of emphasis on phonics teaching. Pupils' attainment in reading at the end of Year 2 was below average in 2017. Teachers and teaching assistants now have a coherent plan for teaching phonics in Reception Year and Years 1 and 2. From September 2017, as a short-term measure, more time and staff were allocated to teach phonics. This has enabled a closer match between pupils' level of understanding and the skills being taught. The school is now involved in a project, with other schools in the trust, to further develop teachers' and teaching assistants' phonics teaching skills. The project aims to deliver a root-and-branch overhaul of phonics teaching, as part of a long-term strategy for improvement. However, it is at an early stage.

Next steps for the school

Leaders and those responsible for governance should ensure that:

- key stage 2 pupils' spelling, punctuation and grammar are further improved
- pupils' basic mathematical skills are strengthened

- parents are provided with more opportunities to learn about the mathematics curriculum
- the application of the new calculation policy is monitored to ensure its consistent effectiveness
- key stage 1 pupils' phonic knowledge is developed more rapidly and sustainably.

I am copying this letter to the chair of the board of trustees, 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 Wiltshire. This letter will be published on the Ofsted website.

Yours sincerely

Paul Williams
Her Majesty's Inspector

Information about the inspection

During the inspection, I held meetings with you and the executive headteacher. I met with the chief executive officer of the trust, two governors and the leaders responsible for English and mathematics. I spoke with many pupils in lessons and at breaktime, and I held a formal meeting with pupils from the school council. I made observations of learning in each of the three classes in the school and looked at several examples of pupils' work. I scrutinised a variety of documents, including the school's own evaluation of its performance, assessment information and records relating to safeguarding. I considered the responses from 19 parents to the Parent View online survey.