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Miss Sheena Priestley
Headteacher
Newton Tony Church of England Voluntary Controlled School
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Dear Miss Priestley

Short inspection of Newton Tony Church of England Voluntary Controlled School

Following my visit to the school on 27 March 2019, 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 2015.

This school continues to be good.

The leadership team has maintained the good quality of education in the school since the last inspection. You became headteacher in February 2017 following a period of significant changes in the school's leadership and governance. The local authority provided you with effective support during the early stages of your headship and together you accurately evaluated the strengths and weaknesses of the school. You acted swiftly and effectively to tackle weaknesses in teaching and to secure stronger leadership of the curriculum. As a result, teaching is now consistently effective across the school and current pupils are making good progress. Staff share your determination to provide the best for every child and are unanimous in feeling well supported and proud to work at the school.

Parents and carers commend the school wholeheartedly. They speak highly of the improvements you have made and appreciate the welcoming and caring ethos of the school. They value the approachability of staff and your work to include them as partners in their children's education. One comment that 'ever since the headteacher took over the school has massively improved' was typical of many parents' views.

The governing body has undergone considerable change since the previous inspection. Most governors have taken up their posts since your appointment. Governors have carefully evaluated their skills and undertaken training to help them to understand and carry out their statutory responsibilities. Although some governors are new to their roles, they are well informed about the quality of education at the school. They use

their visits and the information that you provide to hold leaders to account for pupils' progress with increasing rigour. For example, they have challenged leaders to strengthen teaching for the most able pupils so that a higher proportion achieve the higher standards in writing and mathematics.

You have provided high-quality professional development for teachers by making use of links with other schools locally and training opportunities within the local authority. This has helped those who are also middle leaders to establish high expectations of teaching in the areas they lead and to share good practice with their colleagues. Middle leaders work with you to make purposeful checks on the quality of teaching. This helps them to check what is working well and to provide focused support and training for staff.

You have been largely successful in addressing the areas for improvement identified at the last inspection. Leaders have set higher expectations for the teaching of writing. Current pupils are now making strong progress in writing across the school and can apply their skills to extended pieces of work successfully. Leaders evaluate the school accurately and have produced comprehensive plans for improvement. These plans set out the correct priorities and identify clear timescales. However, the ways of measuring the effectiveness of these actions are not always explicitly focused on the improvements they will make to pupils' outcomes.

Pupils enjoy positive relationships with adults and trust that these adults will listen to their concerns and keep them safe. The school's work to promote pupils' personal development and their understanding of fundamental British values is highly effective. The curriculum includes learning about a wide range of faiths and cultures. Consequently, pupils learn to challenge discrimination and are well prepared for life in modern Britain. Pupils told me that the school helps them to lead healthy lifestyles and to demonstrate leadership through the many additional responsibilities on offer. These include being 'playground leaders' and 'safety warriors' who help keep others safe. They are proud of their school and speak of how the Christian values help them to 'be kind and patient and never give up'.

Safeguarding is effective.

The culture of safeguarding in the school is strong. Leaders make sure that staff know their responsibilities and keep them up to date with statutory guidance on concerns such as peer-to-peer abuse. Staff report concerns promptly, and you follow these up with the relevant agencies in a timely manner. You know the needs of families well and work with them to provide help as soon as needs arise. Records are well maintained and thorough, including pre-employment vetting checks on staff.

Pupils told me that they feel safe and supported in school. They say that bullying is extremely rare and that adults deal with any concerns about bullying and poor behaviour quickly. They have a good understanding of how to stay safe online and have benefited from learning about fire safety and how to keep safe near roads.

Inspection findings

- At the start of the day, we agreed a number of lines of enquiry that I followed throughout the inspection. First, I considered pupils' progress in writing. In 2016 and 2017, the progress of key stage 2 pupils in writing was too low. However, in 2018, pupils' progress was in line with or well above the national average. Since the previous inspection, leaders have introduced strategies to improve the teaching of writing. These improvements include teaching pupils to structure and organise longer pieces of writing and to use more complex grammar and punctuation. Pupils read more challenging texts and teachers use these to extend pupils' vocabulary and their understanding of the features of effective writing. Pupils also follow effective guidance on how to review and edit to improve the quality of their work. As a result, pupils' writing is more precise and detailed.
- Pupils' workbooks across the school show that they write at length across a range of subjects. This work is helping pupils to apply their skills as writers and to deepen their understanding in other subject areas. For example, one piece described a character as sitting 'on a rock overlooking the Bay of Naples'. A greater proportion of pupils across the school are now working at the higher standard in composition, grammar and punctuation. However, the overall impact of some pupils' writing, including the most able, is impaired by poor spelling. Leaders have recently introduced new ways of teaching spelling patterns and rules. However, pupils do not always apply these well enough in their writing.
- Next, I considered the progress that pupils make across the school in mathematics. Leaders have carefully evaluated why pupils' progress in mathematics in 2018 was less strong than in reading and writing at key stage 2. This helped you to identify some gaps in pupils' knowledge and understanding. Leaders have prioritised the teaching of number fluency and calculation methods. Consequently, the accuracy of pupils' recall and the precision of their arithmetic has improved. Teachers also check pupils' understanding of mathematical language carefully so that they develop a deeper understanding of mathematical processes.
- Pupils' workbooks show that pupils are now making good progress. The feedback that they receive from teachers helps them to address misconceptions and move their learning forward. Pupils apply their knowledge to solving problems and explain and justify their mathematical thinking with increasing precision.
- Finally, I considered how well leaders are improving the quality of teaching, learning and assessment in the early years. Over time, the proportion of children who meet or exceed the standards expected for their age has been too low. Evidence that I saw during the inspection confirmed that children's achievement is now rising. Staff have high expectations and have prioritised the teaching of early reading, writing and number skills. More children are currently on track to achieve or exceed the standards expected of them and are better prepared for Year 1.
- Children sustain interest in their learning when selecting activities and in play. They behave well and listen attentively to adults and to each other. However, my observations of learning and scrutiny of children's work records show that children's progress is not consistent over time. Teachers do not always consider well enough what children already know and can do when planning activities. As a result, some

tasks do not help children to apply and improve their emerging skills sufficiently, especially in writing and number. Sometimes children, including the most able, do not always receive enough guidance from adults to help them make the progress that they are capable of.

Next steps for the school

Leaders and those responsible for governance should ensure that:

- they consolidate their work to improve pupils' spelling so that more pupils achieve the higher standard in writing across the school
- adults use their assessment of children's learning in the early years to plan activities which help them to develop their early writing and number skills effectively
- improvement plans include precise measures for success to help leaders and governors check the impact of their plans on pupils' progress, achievement and welfare.

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

Claire Mirams
Ofsted Inspector

Information about the inspection

During the inspection, I spoke to parents at the start of the school day. I held meetings with you and with school leaders. We reviewed your plans for improvement and your evaluation of the school's performance. We observed lessons and reviewed pupils' workbooks together. I also met with members of the governing body and reviewed records of external evaluation of the school. I spoke on the telephone to a representative of Wiltshire local authority. I reviewed pupils' workbooks and records of children's learning in the early years with you and with other leaders. I met with a group of pupils and discussed their viewpoints on the curriculum, behaviour, bullying and keeping safe, including online. I scrutinised various safeguarding records and spoke with the designated safeguarding lead.

I also considered 21 responses to the pupil survey, five responses to the staff survey, 19 parent responses to the online survey, Parent View, and 18 free-text responses.