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4 July 2016

Mrs Philippa Hepworth  
Headteacher  
Stoke Bishop Church of England Primary School  
Cedar Park  
Stoke Bishop  
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Dear Mrs Hepworth

### **Short inspection of Stoke Bishop Church of England Primary School**

Following my visit to the school on 21 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 your predecessor school was judged to be good in June 2012.

#### **This school continues to be good.**

The leadership team has maintained the good quality of education in the school since the last inspection.

As headteacher, you provide strong and purposeful leadership, together with a clear vision and determination that every child deserves the very best education. You work closely with your deputy headteacher to drive forward school improvements. Staff are overwhelmingly positive about your leadership, and together you all share a strong commitment to continually improving provision. Since the school became an academy in April 2013, you have focused on the quality of teaching, learning and assessment. As a result, pupils are making stronger progress and leave the school well prepared for the next stage of their education.

You, along with staff and governors, know the school very well. Your self-evaluation is accurate and identifies the school's many strengths as well as those areas that need developing. At the time of the last inspection, you were asked to accelerate the progress that pupils made. Pupils' progress in reading, writing and mathematics has improved as a result of the work you have done. This is clearly reflected in the 2015 results, which were above the national averages at the end of Year 2 and significantly so at the end of Year 6. Pupils' current progress shows that they are continuing to achieve well.

These improvements are as a result of teachers making sure that pupils know what they need to do in order to improve their work. Pupils describe how the guidance provided by teachers helps them, and they recognise the positive impact it is having on their learning and progress. You and your staff have also developed a curriculum that motivates and excites pupils. As a consequence, pupils enjoy their learning, are eagerly engaged and achieve well. For example, pupils in Year 4 were engrossed in their work on deforestation and the consequences this has on the world.

You are proud of the school's ethos, which is clearly reflected in the way in which all pupils are valued as individuals. You and your leadership team check pupils' academic and personal development regularly. You know in detail the progress each individual pupil makes. Together with your staff, you identify pupils at risk of falling behind, and timely and appropriate interventions ensure that these pupils catch up. The gap between disadvantaged and other pupils is quickly closing as a result of teachers planning activities which precisely meet pupils' needs. The most able pupils achieve well, especially in mathematics, reading, grammar, punctuation and spelling, where the proportion of pupils achieving the higher levels was significantly above the national average in 2015. However, you are not complacent and are striving for this group to make even stronger progress, especially in writing. This detailed approach is supporting all pupils, including disadvantaged and the most able pupils, to achieve well.

You are also fully aware that you have a gender gap, especially in the early years, with boys not achieving as well as girls. Choosing topics that inspire boys is resulting in the gap quickly narrowing, especially in speaking, reading, writing and number. Nevertheless, you know that there is more work to be done to close the gap between girls' and boys' achievement and detailed plans are in place to tackle this.

Your development plans identify the areas you wish to improve. However, plans do not show clearly enough how you, your senior leaders and governors will monitor and check that the actions taken ensure that pupils make the best possible progress.

### **Safeguarding is effective.**

You, your staff and governors are committed to keeping pupils safe. A robust culture of safeguarding is embedded throughout the school. Systems are rigorously implemented and systematically monitored by leaders and governors. You ensure that all who work at the school receive high-quality training so that they are up to date on current guidance and well informed about all types of risk to children. You carefully evaluate the risk of each activity, for example when pupils go on visits to enrich their learning.

Pupils are confident that they can share any worries they may have with an adult. They describe how their school is a safe and happy place, where they are well cared for. They are adamant that bullying is rare and, when it does occur, it is quickly dealt with by the staff. The pupils I spoke to during my visit had a good understanding of the dangers of extreme and radical behaviour, appropriate to their age and stage of development. Pupils understand the importance of keeping safe when using the internet and are clear about the dangers of cyber-bullying. Parents agree that their children are well looked after and safe in school.

Leaders and governors ensure that all safeguarding arrangements are fit for purpose and records are detailed and of good quality. You are tenacious in following up and resolving any concerns. You work effectively with outside agencies to reduce risk to pupils and to keep them safe.

### **Inspection findings**

Staff, pupils and parents are extremely complimentary about how you lead the school. You work closely with your team to drive forward improvements in your determination for the school to become outstanding. The strengths identified at the previous inspection remain.

The school, through accurate self-evaluation, knows exactly which areas need to improve. In particular, while the gaps between the progress and attainment of boys and girls are closing, especially in reading, you know that there is more work to be done to narrow them further. However, there is convincing evidence that you are taking effective action to quickly close the gaps identified. For example, improvements in the teaching of phonics are resulting in improved outcomes in the national phonics screening check at the end of Year 1 for both boys and girls.

You have in place extensive development plans to improve the school. Although these plans show how actions will be taken, they do not precisely identify who is responsible for monitoring and evaluating the implementation of these plans and their impact. This means that there is not a consistently clear way to check whether the planned improvements are having the right outcomes for pupils.

You have a strong teaching team. Staff are committed and endeavour to ensure that all pupils do as well as they possibly can. For example, teachers expose pupils to rich texts to motivate and support them in their writing. This results in the high-quality writing seen across the school during the inspection, which included Year 2 pupils' writing inspired by their work on Shakespeare's 'The Tempest'. Pupils explained how teachers are helpful and provide exciting opportunities so that they get the skills they need as well as positive attitudes to learning as they grow up.

Outcomes in the early years are improving year on year, with a higher proportion of children in Reception achieving a good level of development. You explained that gaps between girls' and boys' achievement are closing because of the way in which the new early years leader has worked to improve the environment and the choices children are able to make in the topics taught. The changes made are inspiring and motivating both boys and girls, making them eager to learn. The ways in which teachers have developed strong links between home and school are evident, including the 'home-school link book', which parents appreciate, along with the school's 'open-door policy'. Parents describe how teachers 'hook their children in' with exciting learning activities. For example, during the inspection, children were enthused by their topic on minibeasts and were engrossed in using information in books to find out new facts.

You are taking effective action to tackle the achievement gap between disadvantaged pupils and their peers. Careful monitoring of every pupil and the provision of work that closely matches their needs are helping them to catch up quickly with their peers. You know exactly where the gaps remain and are taking swift action to ensure that these pupils make the best possible progress.

The most able pupils achieve well, and this is reflected in the 2015 published information. Your focus on the achievement of groups of pupils during pupil progress meetings with teachers has contributed to this. Teachers plan exciting and stimulating lessons. For example, in a Year 1 mathematics lesson, pupils were challenging themselves to find the solution to a range of problem-solving activities linked to their work on fractions. They demonstrated their resilience when faced with a tricky challenge and used their knowledge of number effectively to gain the correct answers. You provide opportunities for the most able pupils to develop their skills through additional activities. For example, you have good links with a local secondary school where a member of its mathematics department runs challenge sessions for the most able mathematicians, encouraging them to explore and investigate for themselves.

You place great importance on developing the leadership skills of teachers. Senior and subject leaders are knowledgeable about their subjects and are confident in providing guidance to their colleagues. They appreciate the high-quality training they have received, which has given them the necessary skills to carry out their responsibilities to good effect. They welcome the increased opportunity to share good practice with each other and with teachers in the local cluster of schools. As a result, teaching is effective in securing consistently good progress in reading, writing and mathematics. However, their development plans do not always precisely show how or when actions are going to be monitored to show whether the actions being taken are having the right outcomes for pupils.

You monitor attendance carefully to check that all pupils attend school regularly. Any non-attendance is carefully monitored and actions are put in place to support parents where necessary. This has been successful in improving the attendance of disadvantaged pupils, whose absenteeism was higher than that of other pupils and is now falling. However, you recognise that there is still work to be done and you are working closely with external agencies to tackle this.

Pupils are extremely happy at school. They describe how they form strong relationships and play happily together, ensuring playtimes and lunchtimes are enjoyable experiences. Consequently, behaviour is good at these times and reports of bullying are extremely rare.

Pupils show great respect for and tolerance of each other's differences. They told the inspector that they are taught to 'treat others how we want to be treated'. They know what types of behaviour are not acceptable. They listen carefully to each other's views even when they might be different from their own. They have a strong understanding of democracy through the voting system used to elect school councillors and house captains. They have a good awareness of living in modern Britain, demonstrating their knowledge and understanding of the diversity of living in Britain and what this means to them as individuals.

Parents speak positively about your school and are confident that you are providing their children with a good education. 'The headteacher and the team have an excellent approach to learning' was a typical comment made by parents.

### **Next steps for the school**

Leaders and governors should ensure that:

- development plans state precisely how and when leaders, including governors, will check that actions taken are improving outcomes for pupils
- any remaining gaps in pupils' achievement, especially between that of disadvantaged pupils and their peers, continue to close quickly.

Yours sincerely

Jen Southall

**Her Majesty's Inspector**

## **Information about the inspection**

During the inspection, I met with you, senior leaders, staff and seven governors. I had a telephone conversation with an officer from the local authority, who outlined the improvements the school has made under your leadership since the previous inspection. I spoke with parents at the start of the day to listen to their opinions. I also looked at the survey results from Ofsted's online questionnaire, Parent View, and considered the comments provided by text message. I met informally with pupils to gather their views. Together, you and I visited classes to observe teaching and look at pupils' work. We sampled the work in some of the pupils' books from every class. I looked at your self-evaluation and school development plan, along with other documentation. I checked the effectiveness of your safeguarding arrangements and your work to ensure the regular attendance of your pupils. I checked your website and confirmed that the school meets the requirements on the publication of information on its website.