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8 February 2016

Mrs Carron Saunders
Executive Headteacher
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East Budleigh
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Dear Mrs Saunders

Short inspection of Drake's Church of England Primary School

Following my visit to the school on 19 January 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 the school was judged to be good in March 2011.

This school continues to be good.

The leadership team has maintained the good quality of education in the school since the previous inspection. Most of the current staff were not present at the time of the previous Ofsted inspection. The governing body has also changed. In such a very small school, changes in staffing and governance can be unsettling for everyone. For a short time, the upheavals meant that the school was not functioning as well as it typically does. Things are now back on track.

The governors have a good range of experience and expertise. The governing body is in the process of reviewing the way that individual members work so that the new members are allocated activities that complement their skills. As a newly formed body, they have not had time to influence the strategic direction of the school. They have not reviewed the school's website, which currently does not meet the Department for Education's requirements. They are aware that this needs to be remedied as soon as possible.

Visits to classrooms, scrutinising pupils' work and analysis of your own records demonstrate that the quality of teaching is characteristically and securely good. Some pupils did not make the progress that they should have done last year. The teaching staff, ably supported by skilled classroom assistants, are ensuring that these pupils are making much better progress now and are steadily catching up and on target to meet or exceed age-related expectations in English and mathematics.

Pupils with special educational needs are making at least good progress from their starting points. Disadvantaged pupils, although small in number throughout the school, generally achieve as well, and often better, than their classmates.

You have successfully used the previous Ofsted inspection report to make important improvements. The changes you have made to the curriculum now ensure that pupils' awareness of cultural diversity in the United Kingdom and the wider world has increased. In addition, you have made sure that teachers use information about what pupils can do to plan lessons that help pupils to learn better and attempt more challenging work.

Teachers now provide better-quality feedback to pupils about their work. During our joint visits to lessons, we saw some excellent examples where pupils and adults were discussing the pupils' work, enabling the pupils to make accelerated progress and produce work of a higher quality. The adults challenged the pupils to consider what was good about their work and what could be improved. We also saw pupils helping each other to succeed and to learn from each other's mistakes and try different ways of solving problems. The written commentary in pupils' books is also helping pupils to improve their work.

You know that children in the Reception year get a good start to their schooling. The current theme around the story of *The Naughty Bus*, along with previous themes, inspires children's curiosity, imaginative play and investigation skills. Indoor and outdoor areas reflect the theme, such as the tray of real baked beans with 'naughty buses' in it. Other equipment, that has good links to literacy and numeracy, is also set out ready for children to direct and construct their own activities. The type and range of resources made directly available to the children change on a regular basis. Children's interests, what they have already learned and what each one needs to learn next inform the changes. Seamless adaptations during lessons by adults for Reception children and pupils in Year 1 ensure that learning experiences are stimulating, challenging and tailored to each child.

Safeguarding is effective.

There is a shared culture of ensuring that pupils are kept safe. Staff and governors receive regular training, and those with responsibility for safeguarding hold up-to-date qualifications at the appropriate level. Leaders have a clear understanding of their new duties, such as keeping pupils safe from the risks of radicalisation.

Pupils are taught how to keep themselves safe through carefully planned activities including e-safety. Consequently, they understand the associated risks of sharing information online and with people they do not really know.

The school works robustly with other agencies and services to ensure the safety of those in their care. All of the safeguarding documents, records, processes and procedures are fit for purpose and successfully implemented.

Inspection findings

- Children's learning and development in the Reception year provides them with a secure start to Year 1. They develop strong speaking, listening and social skills from their relative starting points with an increasingly wide vocabulary which they use to express their thoughts and ideas. The hard-working staff robustly check the quality of the assessments of children's skills and abilities, deliberating and confirming their judgements with each other.
- The school has invested in an online recording system so that records of what children can do are available to parents daily, along with supportive photographic evidence of the children engrossed in their learning activities. The majority of parents look at these records online on a regular, if not daily, basis. Increasingly, parents are spearheading even closer home-to-school communication by adding photographs of their children learning from playful everyday activities undertaken at home, such as cleaning their shoes after helping Grandad to clean his. Those pupils in Year 1 who did not achieve a good level of development at the start of the year are making very good progress. Skilful leadership and excellent communication between staff, combined with assiduous record-keeping, are ensuring that any gaps in pupils' knowledge, skills and understanding are identified. This knowledge is then used well to plan specific activities, and to use learning opportunities when they spontaneously happen, to effectively plug the gaps.
- Due to the small cohort sizes, the attainment of pupils varies from year to year, but reflects the overall ability within the cohorts. Most pupils complete the phonics (letters and the sounds they make) screening check at the required level. Those who do not successfully complete it in Year 1 are effectively supported to complete it the following year. The very few who do not subsequently manage to do so make good progress from their much lower starting points.
- Throughout the school, you have ensured that staff are using information about what pupils have learned much better now to plan the next learning steps for individual pupils. Teachers are making better use of the school's 'elicitation' exercises, which they use to check regularly pupils' understanding of the work they have just completed. This information is then used to plan subsequent activities and lessons to ensure that any misconceptions are clarified and to build upon what the pupils already know and can do.
- You have developed a curriculum that ensures pupils effectively develop their reading, writing, communication and mathematics knowledge and understanding. They then use the skills they have learnt to solve real-life problems. You noticed that the most-able pupils' writing skills, particularly in Year 2, were not as good as their reading. They, along with other pupils throughout the school, are now achieving better in their writing due to the school's focus on writing as an area for improvement in all classes.
- Pupils in Year 6, because of consistently good and better teaching, now, and in the past, are all achieving strongly in reading, writing and mathematics. They participate in a good variety of activities covering a broad range of subjects that ensures that they are very well prepared for joining secondary school.

- Through practical activities in science and design and technology, pupils have learned about electricity and produced motorised wooden buggies. However, pupils do not have enough opportunities to learn about modern material technologies that they experience in everyday life, or learn how to improve the quality of their vehicle designs.

Next steps for the school

Leaders and those responsible for governance should ensure that the:

- school's website is useful to parents, providing them and others with the required information as determined by the Department for Education
- school builds upon the improvements already made to the assessment of pupils' starting points, and progresses from them, so that teaching and pupils' achievement continue to improve
- pupils are given more opportunities to learn about modern material technologies and develop their design skills.

I am copying this letter to the Chair of the Governing Body, the Director of Education for the Diocese of Exeter, the Regional Schools Commissioner and the Director of Children's Services for Devon County Council. This letter will be published on the Ofsted website.

Yours sincerely

Steffi Penny
Her Majesty's Inspector

Information about the inspection

During this inspection, I met with you, other leaders, members of the governing body and parents. I spoke with pupils during lessons and scrutinised the quality of their work. I took account of the three responses to a staff survey and 24 responses by parents to Ofsted's online questionnaire, Parent View.

A wide range of documentary evidence was considered including records relating to safeguarding, the quality of teaching, the curriculum, assessment information and the school's analysis of attendance, behaviour and leavers' destinations.