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Mr Stephen Hitchcock  
Headteacher  
St Peter's Church of England Primary School  
Moor Lane  
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Devon  
EX9 6QF

Dear Mr Hitchcock

### **Short inspection of St Peter's Church of England Primary School**

Following my visit to the school on 9 May 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 April 2013.

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

The leadership team has maintained the good quality of education in the school since the last inspection. Staff and parents overwhelmingly recognise your pivotal role in shaping the school's direction after a period of instability in leadership and many changes of staff. A typical comment from a parent was that 'the headteacher is an inspirational figure to the children and staff.'

Since your appointment, you have built a strong team of skilled senior leaders who have brought increased impetus to the pace of change. Together you have developed a culture where staff feel valued and included in the school's vision for improvement. As one member of staff commented, 'We are all united in our desire to be a "great school" and are committed to getting there.' You rightly value the support you now have from skilled governors. Governors demonstrate great tenacity in scrutinising every new initiative for evidence of its impact on pupils' achievement.

Pupils show their enjoyment of school through their very good behaviour and high levels of attendance. They relish the challenges of the school's broad curriculum, where they learn in exciting ways in and beyond the classroom. They are proud of the school's sporting and musical achievements and equally proud that these opportunities are open to all pupils.

At the previous inspection, the school was asked to improve the quality of teaching by enabling teachers to see and learn from the best practice. Teachers now regularly work together and have valuable coaching sessions with leaders and

external advisers. You have improved the effectiveness of assessment. It now has a more central place in how teachers identify and plan the way they close gaps in pupils' knowledge and skills. You have invested in the development of teaching assistants' skills, as the school was asked to do at the previous inspection. Teaching assistants are now highly effective in supporting individuals and groups of pupils across the curriculum.

As leaders and governors, you were disappointed by a dip in pupils' achievements in 2016. You responded quickly by seeking high-quality advice and training which resulted in teachers gaining the confidence they needed to teach the current curriculum for mathematics and writing. The improved progress of pupils in both these subjects shows that this initiative has led to more effective teaching. However, you have rightly identified that this work should continue as a priority.

### **Safeguarding is effective.**

Pupils' well-being lies at the heart of all that the school does, and safeguarding is a high priority. Staff are trained well to recognise and report concerns that a pupil may be at risk of harm. The school takes an active part in working with other agencies to secure additional help and support for families in need.

Safeguarding arrangements are fit for purpose. Records are detailed and of a high quality, including those checks to ensure that staff and volunteers are suitable to work with children. Governors regularly verify that arrangements for safeguarding are effective. They have ensured that the school site is safe, for example through a thorough health and safety assessment for the use of the swimming pool.

Pupils say that everyone is friendly and that they help pupils new to the school to settle in. The school places great emphasis on pupils' personal development and gives them skills to keep themselves safe, including when using the internet. Pupils say that while teachers help to sort out any disagreements, pupils also have a responsibility to ensure that nobody is bullied. As one said, 'We can't always stop problems starting, but we can make sure they don't carry on.'

Parents overwhelmingly see the school as a caring community where their children are respected as individuals. They say that leaders and teachers are approachable. Parents rightly have confidence that their children are in safe hands.

### **Inspection findings**

- In this inspection, we firstly explored whether improvements in the teaching of writing were now leading to pupils making better progress. In particular, we looked at the impact of improvements on the progress of middle-ability pupils. We also checked whether pupils were now developing spelling skills more securely. We saw that you now use high-quality stories and non-fiction 'information' books to stimulate pupils' writing and to guide them in the sentence structures and vocabulary which best fit what they are writing about. For example, in Year 2, pupils were able to explain how reading a passage about

gorillas was helping them to choose good ideas for their own writing. Teachers in key stages 1 and 2 set out clear expectations for what pupils should include in their writing. Pupils respond well to this and to additional guidance around the classroom.

- You have recently developed pupils' spelling through raising teachers' expectations of what they should teach. Pupils are taking more responsibility for checking familiar spellings and recording new vocabulary in their spelling logs. They edit their own work well. The improved and 'polished' work shows that they are able to find their own errors and correct them. Pupils are consistently making improved progress in writing across Years 1 to 6, and more are showing skills which indicate high levels of achievement.
- Children in early years are making progress in their writing, but not as rapidly as in other aspects of their curriculum. Teachers have not systematically enough built children's skills of correctly forming their letters or applying their phonic knowledge in their writing. Through the school's improvement plan, you and governors have rightly identified the need to continue work to raise standards in writing further.
- Our second line of enquiry was prompted by a lower proportion of pupils reaching the expected standard in phonics in 2016 than in previous years. The positive impact of recent training for teachers and teaching assistants is clear in the improved level of pupils' skills. For example, in Year 1, pupils read and sort words with similar sounds into their correct spelling patterns. Assessment information shows that the vast majority of pupils in Year 1 are working at the expected standard. Pupils in key stage 1 apply their phonic skills well in their writing.
- We agreed that the improvements the school had made to overcome recent lower standards in mathematics would form our third line of enquiry. You have accelerated the progress pupils are making in arithmetic through rigorously identifying and closing gaps in their previous learning. Pupils are diligent in mathematics lessons and relish opportunities to apply their strong arithmetical skills to solving problems and in playing mathematics games.
- You have invested heavily in mathematics resources to extend pupils' mathematical thinking. You recognise that not all teachers are yet confident to make full use of these and consequently the teaching of reasoning skills is not yet an integral part of all classes. More pupils across the school are now working at the expected level, but the inconsistent development of pupils' mathematical thinking is still limiting their chances of reaching their potential for high achievement.
- As a final line of enquiry, we agreed to examine the impact of additional funding the school receives for pupils who may be vulnerable to underachievement. You have raised the level of accountability for the achievement of both disadvantaged pupils and those who have special educational needs and/or disabilities. This is because you now have a senior leader with responsibility for checking that teaching and extra support are leading to disadvantaged pupils making good progress. The leader reviews pupils' progress regularly. If pupils are not reaching their potential, they receive extra sharply focused support. Teachers'

assessments and pupils' work indicate that most pupils are at the expected level for their age. Pupils' progress is consistently good, including those who are more able.

- You have ensured that all teachers understand how to best meet the needs in lessons of pupils who have special educational needs and/or disabilities. Highly skilled teaching assistants adapt the work pupils do and give them the encouragement they need to succeed. The newly appointed leader for this aspect of the school's work has ensured that detailed plans for individual pupils are in place and regularly reviewed. As a result, these pupils are now making good progress. Governors rigorously check that new initiatives are having an impact on pupils' achievement.

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

Leaders and those responsible for governance should ensure that:

- more pupils achieve highly in mathematics through teachers deepening pupils' mathematical understanding
- standards of writing continue to improve, particularly in the early years.

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. This letter will be published on the Ofsted website.

Yours sincerely

Wendy Marriott  
**Ofsted Inspector**

### **Information about the inspection**

During the inspection, I visited classes, accompanied by you and your senior leaders, to observe teaching and learning. Together we looked at a number of pupils' books. I spoke with pupils in lessons, at lunchtime and in a discussion group. I met with you, other leaders and teachers, and four governors. I also spoke with an officer of the local authority.

I scrutinised school documentation in relation to safeguarding. I reviewed the school's assessments, self-evaluation and development plan. I met with leaders to discuss the school's support for pupils who are disadvantaged and those who have special educational needs and/or disabilities. I considered the views of the 100 parents who responded to Parent View and the responses to Ofsted's online questionnaire by 30 members of staff.