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Mr Mike Jory
Headteacher
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Dear Mr Jory

Short inspection of Shipham Church of England First School

Following my visit to the school on 7 November 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 May 2013.

This school continues to be good.

The leadership team has maintained the good quality of education in the school since the previous inspection. Shipham remains a school where the strengths and talents of pupils and staff are highly valued. Since your appointment when the school federated with three other local schools, you have set out a strong commitment to the pursuit of excellence. This effective arrangement has enabled staff to share expertise, receive training and agree standards of achievement. You have high expectations and encourage pupils to be successful and enjoy their learning. Working closely with your dedicated team of staff, you have made some necessary improvements while maintaining the best aspects of the school's provision.

You, together with your staff and governors, know your school very well. You acted promptly on the recommendation from the previous inspection to improve the provision for pupils who have special educational needs and/or disabilities. Plans for their provision are tightly focused on identifying specific needs and improving teaching to address these. Pupils are making better progress as a result of carefully targeted work and effective support.

You are ensuring that, through purposeful teaching, the most able pupils are suitably challenged in their work and achieve highly. This is particularly evident in reading and writing, where standards are above those expected for their age by the end of Year 4. You are providing training for staff to extend their skills and increase

their effectiveness to meet the requirements of the new mathematics curriculum. However, you acknowledge that there is more to do to ensure that all pupils, including the most able, are fully extended in their learning in mathematics.

Parents are overwhelmingly supportive of the school and praise the dedication of staff in caring for their children. Warm and effective relationships between pupils and staff help to promote high standards and enjoyment in learning. This is what appeals to parents, who are delighted that their children attend this 'gem' of a school. Pupils talk enthusiastically about the experiences that school has to offer, such as learning outdoors and the interesting range of educational visits. This is why they are rarely late or absent from school.

Safeguarding is effective.

You and your governors have created a strong culture for safeguarding, making sure that arrangements are fit for purpose and that records are detailed and of good quality. You check that policies and systems are followed and review them periodically. Recruitment and vetting procedures for appointing staff follow the statutory guidance stringently. Staff and governors receive regular training in the latest requirements for safeguarding, including how to keep pupils safe from extremism and radicalisation. They are well trained in identifying possible signs of risk and harm and are clear about how to report any concerns about pupils. All risks are thoroughly assessed by leaders and regularly updated, for example with regard to fire safety and educational visits.

You all know the families of children who attend Shipham very well and are vigilant about their welfare, especially any whose circumstances make them vulnerable. You work closely with local agencies to ensure that pupils receive the care and support they need. Parents appreciate the lengths to which you go to provide an inclusive and welcoming environment where every child thrives. They praise the openness of you and your staff and your positive response to any parental concerns. Pupils say they feel extremely safe in school because staff are very kind and always there to help them.

Pupils are prepared well to manage any potential risks to their safety. They have a good understanding of what constitutes bullying and how to combat this, although it seldom happens here. They are knowledgeable about staying safe on the internet, knowing never to give out personal information to strangers.

Inspection findings

- During the inspection, I met with you to discuss the school's progress since the previous inspection. We agreed the following lines of enquiry: how effectively the curriculum provides challenge for the most able pupils; how well leaders have increased progress rates in writing and mathematics to enable pupils to reach high standards; and, how well the school keeps pupils safe.
- You are continuously reviewing the curriculum to ensure that all pupils are challenged in their learning and aspire to achieve as well as they can. For

example, older pupils are enthralled by their history topic 'The Victorians' and are motivated to carry on their learning at home. Currently, the most able pupils, including those who are disadvantaged, are making good progress throughout the school in a wide range of subjects. Teachers plan work that requires them to think deeply and extend their knowledge and understanding. However, at times, the tasks set for them are not challenging enough, especially in mathematics. Over time, this reduces their ability to master more difficult concepts.

- In 2016, very few pupils exceeded the expected standard for their age in writing. To address this, you provided staff with training and opportunities to meet with colleagues in other schools to share expertise and agree standards. During my visit, we looked at a range of written work by pupils across the school. We agreed that standards are much improved, especially in grammar, punctuation and spelling. Pupils regularly produce high-quality writing that is well presented. For example, Year 3 and 4 pupils wrote excellent newspaper articles about Queen Victoria's coronation using imaginative language to bring facts to life. As a result, more pupils are on track to reach the higher standard.
- Although good, standards in mathematics are not as strong as those in reading and writing when pupils leave the school in Year 4. In response, you are providing more training for staff in new approaches to teaching mathematics. Teachers are better able to plan work that develops pupils' fluency in calculation skills and in understanding mathematical concepts. The work in pupils' books shows that this is having a positive impact on their mastery of numbers and they are achieving higher standards.
- Increasingly, teachers set work that requires pupils to think more deeply about mathematical problems, giving reasons for their answers and explaining their methods. However, you acknowledge that this work is not yet extensive enough in day-to-day teaching to deepen pupils' knowledge and understanding further.

Next steps for the school

Leaders and those responsible for governance should ensure that:

- the most able pupils tackle even more demanding work
- teachers continue to develop pupils' reasoning skills in mathematics by requiring pupils to explain their methods and thinking more extensively.

I am copying this letter to the chair of the governing body, the director of education for the Diocese of Bath and Wells, the regional schools commissioner and the director of children's services for Somerset. This letter will be published on the Ofsted website.

Yours sincerely

Sandra Woodman
Ofsted Inspector

Information about the inspection

During the inspection, I met with you and discussed the school's self-evaluation, information about pupils' progress and improvements since the previous inspection. Together, we observed learning in classrooms and looked at a range of pupils' work in books. I listened to several pupils reading from key stage 1 and key stage 2. I met with pupils to talk about their experience of school life. I held meetings with middle leaders and with three governors. In addition, I spoke with a representative of the local authority.

I looked at a range of written evidence, including documents relating to safeguarding and attendance information. I took account of the written comments of 28 parents who completed Ofsted's online questionnaire, Parent View, the views of parents who spoke to me before the start of the school day and of those who wrote to me. I also took account of the views of five members of staff who responded to Ofsted's online questionnaire.