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Cheryl Hawkings
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Dear Mrs Hawkings

Short inspection of Vernham Dean Gillum's Church of England Primary School

Following my visit to the school on 20 September 2018, 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 January 2015.

Based on the evidence gathered during this short inspection, I have identified some priorities for improvement which I advise the school to address. In light of these priorities, the school's next inspection will be a full section 5 inspection. **There is no change to the school's current overall effectiveness grade of good as a result of this inspection.**

Parents and pupils value the caring nature of the school. You, together with the staff and governing body, are committed to providing the best possible experience for all pupils. However, some areas need further improvement. You are aware that aspects of teaching, learning and assessment do not meet the needs of all pupils. Consequently, not all pupils are making as much progress as they could.

In the term that you have been at the school, you have identified and maintained the school's current strengths. The governing body appreciates this approach and has provided some useful support and challenge for you. Both staff and governors are very committed to your vision, where all in the community are valued and contribute to the school's success.

Pupils are very happy. They say that they love their school. Pupils say that staff treat them with care and respect. There are positive relationships between pupils of different ages, and older pupils enjoy helping younger children. Pupils are excited about the growing opportunities they have to take responsibility in the school. For example, they talked enthusiastically about the new school council and house captains. Pupils' high levels of attendance reflect how much they enjoy coming to school.

Parents value the way in which you listen and respond to their views. They are extremely positive about the school and recognise the positive impact of the changes you are making. Parents appreciate the strong sense of community at the school and the high levels of care that you and the staff provide for the pupils and their families.

Since the previous inspection, action has been taken to improve assessment, raise attainment in writing and to ensure pupils get the challenge in lessons that they need to fulfil their potential. Although there are improvements in these areas, you rightly identify that there is more to do. Pupils' attainment in writing remains inconsistent and the most able pupils do not always make as much progress as they could. Leaders now need to rapidly improve the quality of teaching so that all pupils can achieve their full potential.

Over time, almost all pupils achieve the expected standard by the time they leave Year 6. However, pupils who have special educational needs (SEN) and/or disabilities and the most able pupils do not always make as much progress as they could. This is because teaching does not meet their needs effectively enough.

Safeguarding is effective.

You have continued to promote a strong culture of safeguarding, ensuring all staff are appropriately trained and know what they need to do if they have concerns. Robust action is taken to ensure that outside agencies are informed and involved, so that pupils are well supported and kept safe. Governors know what they need to do to check that safeguarding is strong and they carry out useful monitoring visits to ensure that practice is effective. Safer recruitment practices are embedded and staff checks are carried out, in line with statutory guidance.

Pupils learn to keep themselves safe. They are aware of potential hazards on the internet, on roads and when meeting strangers, for example. They say that staff take good care of them and they know who they would talk to if they were worried about anything.

Inspection findings

- We agreed to focus on specific areas during this short inspection. The first of these was the teaching of, and progress in, writing. Since the last inspection, pupils write more regularly and have tasks that link well to the skills they are developing. The most effective teaching of writing happens when teachers plan sequences of lessons linked to topics which enthuse pupils and motivate them to write. However, the teaching of writing is not consistent across the school. Some pupils make good progress because they have the opportunity to develop their skills through practice and responding to relevant feedback, but this is not the case for enough pupils in the school.
- The second area we agreed to review in detail was the way in which teaching is adapted to meet the needs of pupils who have SEN and/or disabilities. Over time,

not enough of these pupils have made good progress. The special educational needs coordinator provides effective one-to-one support for individuals to help them learn key skills and make accelerated progress. She has a good understanding of what these pupils need and ensures that the additional programmes and activities support their learning well. You have rightly identified that the needs of these pupils could be met more effectively by class teachers. However, this approach is in the early stages and its impact is not yet evident.

- We also looked at how well teaching meets the needs of the most able pupils. This was identified at the previous inspection as being an area for further development. Although teachers plan lessons at different levels to meet pupils' differing needs, they do not routinely ensure that activities closely match what the most able pupils know and can do. This means that the most able pupils do not get work that is hard enough for them. Consequently, although most pupils reach age-related expectations, not as many reach the higher standards as should be the case
- We also considered how effectively teachers use assessment to inform the next steps of learning. Teachers follow the school's marking policy well. Better, and more regular, assessment is being used to give pupils clearer feedback and guidance. As a result, some pupils are making more rapid progress.
- The final area we reviewed was the way in which leaders check that pupils are making enough progress. The school's approach to checking pupils' progress over time has only been recently introduced. This means that leaders are not yet holding teachers to account for the progress that pupils make. Teachers are now aware of the need to check that pupils make sufficient progress and you have systems in place to make sure this is happening. However, it is too early to see the impact of these new processes.
- The quality of work that pupils achieve is not consistent across the curriculum. Pupils' work in writing and mathematics is of a higher quality than work in other subjects. Pupils' work in other curriculum areas does not routinely challenge pupils effectively.

Next steps for the school

Leaders and those responsible for governance should ensure that:

- teaching of writing is consistently strong so that pupils in all year groups make good progress
- pupils who have SEN and/or disabilities get the support they need to make good progress
- the most able pupils are supported and challenged effectively to make the progress they should.

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

Yours sincerely

Louise Adams
Ofsted Inspector

Information about the inspection

During the inspection, I met with you to discuss the school's effectiveness. Together, we visited lessons to observe pupils' learning and to look at work in their books. I met with a group of governors, including the chair of the governing body, teachers, support staff and a group of pupils from Years 4 and 5. I also spoke to a representative from the local authority. I gathered views from parents in the playground at the beginning of the school day and considered 63 responses to Parent View, Ofsted's online survey. I evaluated the school's safeguarding arrangements and reviewed documentation to evidence the schools' effectiveness, minutes of governors' meetings and records of checks on teaching and learning.