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Mrs Jayne Pedley
Headteacher
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Dear Mrs Pedley

Short inspection of Hillesley Church of England Primary School

Following my visit to the school on 17 July 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 July 2014.

This school continues to be good.

The leadership team has maintained the good quality of education in the school since the last inspection. You and your staff have created a vibrant and nurturing environment. Each pupil is known, well cared for and supported. Parents and carers value the openness of both yourself and the staff, are highly supportive and are confident in the work that you do.

Leaders and governors have an accurate overview of the school's strengths and weaknesses. For example, they have prioritised the development of writing and have sustained the strong outcomes in reading. Leaders are proactive in developing effective working relationships with other schools and the local authority. This means that they have an accurate understanding of the standards achieved by pupils. You and your team benefit from shared activities to continue to improve the quality of teaching, learning and assessment.

Since the last inspection, you have strengthened leadership to provide even greater capacity in tackling identified weaknesses. There is effective monitoring of the quality of teaching and you have adapted the school's curriculum in light of changes to the national curriculum in 2014. There is increasing challenge for the most able pupils in key stage 2, who now demonstrate a deeper understanding in reading and writing. However, too few of the most able pupils reach the highest standards of which they are capable in mathematics.

Pupils' behaviour is a strength. They are welcoming and enjoy their time at school. Staff model positive interactions and pupils respond well to the 'Lifting Our Learning' expectations. The school's clearly defined values underpin its work and this is demonstrated in the way pupils respond to each other. Pupils take part in leadership activities, such as through the school council, growing produce on a local allotment and benefiting from sporting and cultural activities. Indeed, younger pupils were busy preparing for their 'Victorian Picnic' at the time of the inspection.

Staff organise a range of visits to broaden pupils' horizons and these prepare them well for the future. A recent trip to Gloucester Cathedral and Cheltenham synagogue enabled pupils to learn about different faiths. Furthermore, a visit from a local engineering company promoted careers in science, technology and engineering. Leaders go to great lengths to ensure that pupils are prepared well for their next steps by, for example, contacting Year 6 pupils after they have left to invite comments about their experience of moving into secondary school.

Safeguarding is effective.

Leaders follow government guidelines carefully to ensure that staff are safe to work with pupils. The single central record is regularly maintained. Once appointed, all staff are trained so they understand their safeguarding responsibilities. As a result, staff know what they need to do when they have a concern. Staff are vigilant in reporting any issues and these are dealt with diligently.

Leaders are proud of their inclusive philosophy and place great emphasis on promoting pupils' emotional well-being. Where there are concerns, staff have worked successfully with pupils and their families, ensuring that appropriate support is in place.

Staff are mindful of the need to equip pupils with the skills necessary to protect themselves when online. They 'quiz' pupils on their understanding of the internet and social media and provide suitable curriculum activities to develop this further.

Inspection findings

- At the beginning of the inspection, we agreed the key lines of enquiry. The first of these focused on the effectiveness of leaders' actions to improve the quality of writing. This has been a priority for the school, as has improvement in the accuracy of pupils' spelling.
- In the early years, children demonstrate an ability to meet, and exceed, age-related expectations. Teachers support pupils to develop the dexterity to form letters confidently and then begin to write simple sentences. The most able children can write more complex sentences and use punctuation accurately.
- When looking at pupils' books, it is clear that some of them are able to develop their writing confidently and to a high standard. They respond to a range of stimuli and write for a variety of audiences and purposes. Pupils use colourful imagery and vocabulary to improve the composition of their writing. In these cases, pupils adapt the sentence length and use punctuation to create effect. A

particularly valued feature is the 'Big Write' book. This tracks the development of pupils' writing from when they begin at the school to their most current work. Pupils take great pride in seeing the development in their writing skills as they move through the school.

- Nonetheless, there is still much variability in what teachers expect of pupils across year groups. One of the reasons for this is that teachers do not remedy gaps in understanding quickly enough. This means that pupils are not able to build on their skills and demonstrate that they can apply these independently in the future. For younger pupils, this is illustrated in the illegibility of their handwriting and for older pupils in the inaccuracy of spelling, paragraphing and punctuation. Errors persist, which limits the progress that some pupils make.
- The second line of enquiry focused on the effectiveness of leaders' actions to improve the progress pupils make in mathematics. We looked at how well pupils are encouraged to extend their understanding. Across the school, the mathematics curriculum is suitably broad. By the end of Years 2 and 6, most pupils reach the national standards expected for their age.
- In the early years, children are able to recognise and order numbers appropriately. The most able can solve simple problems. In key stage 1, mathematical fluency is developed and pupils successfully apply their reasoning skills. In key stage 2, this continues and, where teachers pose more complex problems, pupils can solve these logically and accurately.
- However, this approach is not secure across all year groups and, where this is the case, both challenge and expectation are too low, particularly in the completion and presentation of work. Teachers do not plan next steps consistently well to build on pupils' prior knowledge. Consequently, some pupils lack confidence in being able to apply their skills and knowledge to more challenging questions.
- The final line of enquiry centred on the effectiveness of leadership and management to continue to improve pupils' attainment and progress. Both leaders and governors are committed to the success of the school and have a clear understanding of the right priorities. Governors visit the school regularly and have a positive working relationship with staff. Leaders share information freely which means that governors have first-hand evidence of the quality of education the school provides.
- However, leaders do not consistently evaluate the impact of their work closely enough. At times, self-evaluation lacks precision and is overly descriptive. This hampers improvement planning and slows the speed with which you tackle some areas for improvement.

Next steps for the school

Leaders and those responsible for governance should ensure that:

- self-evaluation is developed further so that the impact of actions is outlined with more precision

- teachers' skills are developed so they are able to consistently plan work that matches the learning needs of all pupils
- the approach to mathematics is secured across the school so that all pupils improve their reasoning and problem-solving skills, including the most able pupils
- pupils develop their accuracy of spelling and punctuation so they are able to demonstrate these skills independently.

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

Yours sincerely

Sarah McGinnis
Her Majesty's Inspector

Information about the inspection

At the beginning of the day, I met with you and your leadership team to agree key lines of enquiry. Following this, I visited lessons and scrutinised pupils' written work across a range of subjects and age groups, jointly with leaders. I met with members of the leadership team and representatives from the governing body, and spoke with pupils. I also spoke on the telephone with a representative from the local authority. I scrutinised documentation provided by the school, including policies relating to safeguarding. When making final judgements, I considered 29 responses to Ofsted's online survey, Parent View, and four responses to Ofsted's staff survey.