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Mrs Sarah Whalley
Headteacher
Exminster Community Primary
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Dear Mrs Whalley

Short inspection of Exminster Community Primary

Following my visit to the school on 7 March 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 February 2013.

This school continues to be good.

The leadership team has maintained the good quality of education in the school since the last inspection.

Since taking up the headship in summer 2014 you have improved many aspects of this school. You have changed the leadership structure by introducing a number of key teams of staff who work on particular themes across the school. As a consequence, staff feel involved in development planning and are eager to share ideas about improving the school further. You have taken steps to increase pupils' involvement in decision-making. Pupils from the 'school learning team' were proud to tell me about their regular meetings with you and subsequent actions. You have skilfully helped pupils draw the core values of the school into a fresh presentation as 'rainbow values', maintaining the best of the past while refreshing the vision for the future.

Pupils are keen to learn. They enjoy lessons and also take part readily in the activities provided before school, at lunchtime and after school. Your inclusive leadership contributes to the positive ethos of the school and the caring relationships between staff and pupils. This leads to pupils' good behaviour and so helps them to make good progress. Parents are very supportive of the school. The overwhelming majority who responded to the Parent View questionnaire would recommend this school to another parent.

You have successfully addressed the areas for improvement identified at the previous inspection. You and senior leaders make regular checks on the quality of teaching. You use these constructively and so you have helped teachers to improve the quality of their work. Teachers' expectations have risen and this has helped to raise pupils' progress, which is now above average in key stage 2 in both reading and mathematics. Pupils now have frequent opportunities to make choices about their own learning. Many pupils find this motivates them to work hard.

Historically, boys have not attained the same high standards as girls in reading and writing. You are working on a strategy to help boys achieve as highly as the girls in future and there are signs that this is having some success.

The governing body has changed in the last year. A new chair of the governing body has been appointed and several new governors have joined. They have re-organised their structure so that each member has a portfolio of responsibilities. This has refreshed their approach and is enabling them to challenge and support you effectively. For example, disadvantaged pupils' progress in 2016 was not as strong as that of other pupils in the school. Governors recognised this quickly and have ensured that steps are being taken to improve the progress of this group of pupils.

Safeguarding is effective.

The safeguarding team have ensured that all safeguarding arrangements are fit for purpose and records are detailed and of high quality. All the proper checks are made on staff to make sure that they are suitable to work with children. Training records indicate that once appointed staff keep their skills up to date.

You have a thorough knowledge of the needs of your pupils through the work of your student and family support team. This team is quick to respond to concerns and works effectively with agencies beyond the school where this is necessary.

Pupils are clear that they feel safe at school. They are taught how to keep themselves safe. In particular, they are taught how to use the internet safely. Pupils told me that bullying is rare but if it does happen the school takes it seriously and deals with it quickly.

In your role as designated safeguarding lead, you have ensured that keeping pupils safe and secure is seen as everyone's responsibility. You have successfully fostered a culture which encourages open discussion about safeguarding and, consequently, staff are suitably skilled and vigilant.

Inspection findings

- Senior leaders and governors have a clear understanding of the strengths and weaknesses of the school. The governing body is able to identify strategic priorities effectively; therefore, senior leaders have precise development aims. The headteacher and senior leaders have included the whole staff group in

drawing up plans for improvement. They have encouraged discussion and communication. As a result, there is a palpable sense of togetherness as staff work towards their common objectives.

- The first line of enquiry I followed on this inspection concerned the progress made by disadvantaged pupils. In 2016, pupils' progress in mathematics was above average. This led to a high proportion of Year 6 pupils attaining at the expected standard and a high proportion going further and reaching a high standard in mathematics. Disadvantaged pupils, however, made less progress and so the proportion reaching the expected standard and the high standard respectively were lower than the national average. Disadvantaged pupils' attainment in English grammar, punctuation and spelling in key stage 2 was lower than that of other pupils nationally and other pupils in the school. A similar pattern existed in key stage 1 in 2016; disadvantaged pupils attained lower outcomes than other pupils nationally in reading, writing and mathematics.
- Senior leaders have enacted a detailed strategy to help disadvantaged pupils make better progress. Staff implement these plans rigorously, for example identifying individual barriers to learning for disadvantaged pupils early and looking for innovative ways to meet their needs. Consequently, disadvantaged pupils' progress has improved. The school's assessment information and pupils' work indicates that disadvantaged pupils are currently making the same good progress in key stage 2 as other pupils. Disadvantaged pupils in key stage 1 are also now on track to attain at a similar level to other pupils in the school. Senior leaders are not complacent, however; they recognise the need to continually build the repertoire of approaches available to staff to help this group of pupils.
- The quality of pupils' writing in key stage 2 was another of my key lines of enquiry. Pupils' progress in writing in 2016 was not at the same high level as in other parts of the curriculum. Leaders have taken swift action to address this. The team responsible for achievement in English have introduced initiatives to improve pupils' writing. For example, pupils are now confident about editing their work. Pupils' books show that these initiatives are hitting home. The quality of written work has improved and many pupils are now achieving at a greater depth. Many pupils spoke about the value of reflecting on and improving their work in all areas of the curriculum as well as in English.
- Senior leaders are changing the way they work with parents. Many parents already volunteer to read with pupils during the school day, and this is much appreciated. Senior leaders are extending this work, for example by inviting groups of parents to come into school to see learning in action. This work is at an early stage but parents indicate that it is helping them to support their children's learning at home.
- A third key line of enquiry centred on the achievement of boys in the school. In key stage 2 last year, boys' progress from their starting points was in line with the national average in reading and writing. However, this was not as strong as girls' progress, which was above average. As part of a drive to involve pupils more in decisions about their learning, senior leaders have introduced an approach to topic work known as 'get on and learn' (GOAL) time. In each year, pupils are given more of a voice in choosing themes to study. Boys in particular

have responded positively to GOAL time; they are motivated and keen to learn. In key stage 2, however, boys' spelling, punctuation and grammar skills, although improved, are not yet as well developed as the girls'.

Next steps for the school

Leaders and those responsible for governance should ensure that:

- the range of expertise of staff to support disadvantaged pupils is extended by continuing to draw on the experience offered by the local network of schools
- the partnership work that has already begun with parents is developed so that parents are more involved with pupils' writing
- boys are given more opportunities to develop their spelling, punctuation and grammar skills throughout the curriculum.

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

Yours sincerely

Paul Williams
Her Majesty's Inspector

Information about the inspection

During the inspection, I held meetings with you, the chair of the governing body and seven other governors, middle and senior leaders, and held a telephone conversation with a representative of the local authority. I held a meeting with the pupils from the 'school learning team' and spoke with many other pupils informally at break and lunchtime. I made observations of learning across the school jointly with senior leaders. I looked at several examples of pupils' work and spoke with pupils during lessons. I scrutinised a variety of documents including the school's own evaluation of its performance, assessment information, records of checks leaders make on the suitability of staff to work with children and information relating to attendance. I took account of responses to questionnaires from 242 pupils and 51 staff. I also considered 112 responses from parents to the Ofsted online survey, Parent View.