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Piccadilly Gate
Store Street
Manchester
M1 2WD

T 0300 123 4234
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Mr Steve Davis
Headteacher
Northleaze Church of England Primary School
Brook Close
Long Ashton
Bristol
BS41 9NG

Dear Mr Davis

Short inspection of Northleaze Church of England Primary School

Following my visit to the school on 27 September 2016, 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 June 2012.

This school continues to be good.

You and your leadership team, including the governors, have maintained the good quality of education in the school since the last inspection. Although your evaluation of the effectiveness of the school is slightly overgenerous, you and your leadership team, including the governors, continue to strive for excellence.

Since the last inspection, closer working relationships with other local schools have helped teachers to share best practice and reflect on the way that they teach. The training that you and your teaching staff have recently been involved in has helped you reflect on the type of activities and learning styles that you adopt as a school. Teachers talk enthusiastically about never placing a limit on what their pupils can learn in their lessons. They are passionate about planning activities which reinforce key-skills learning and help pupils to think more deeply. Your staff have introduced a consistent approach to planning lessons and this includes differing levels of challenge. Pupils eagerly report that they do not necessarily select the easiest task and enjoy extending their thinking through the challenges that are set. Senior leaders are also encouraging teachers to improve progress in mathematics by making more use of practical and visual resources. However, you recognise that this is more successful in some classes and subject areas than others.

Since the last inspection, teachers have developed better ways to check and assess pupils' work and help them to identify the next steps in their learning. Pupils check their own work carefully and assess their classmates' work with maturity and sensitivity. 'Big Wow days' are used effectively to introduce new topics and engage

the pupils. The learning that has taken place during the teaching of a topic is carefully assessed at the end of each unit of work. This is raising both teacher and pupil expectations of what can be achieved.

Since the last inspection, strategic planning has been simplified and includes success indicators for the improvements which are to be made. The person responsible for monitoring these improvements is noted to ensure that there is accountability. The most recent plan accurately identifies the need for senior and subject leaders to have a sharper understanding of the attainment and progress of different groups of pupils across the school. This will enable them to quickly check their progress and tackle any gaps in pupils' learning.

Safeguarding is effective.

First and foremost is the safety of the pupils within your care. You know your 'Northleaze families' well and keep a close eye on every pupil, especially those whose circumstances may, from time to time, make them vulnerable. Staff are well trained and know that any concerns must be quickly reported to you as the designated safeguarding lead.

You have a clear understanding of the need to protect pupils against all possible risks. Governors regularly carry out health and safety checks to make sure that the school is a safe place, and they regularly assess behaviour logs. You and your governors fully understand how to recruit safely and ensure that all staff are carefully vetted prior to employment. All staff and governors have undertaken training on the prevention of extremism and radicalisation in schools and know the signs they need to look for.

Pupils report that their school is a safe place to be and know they can go to an adult for help and advice. Pupils understand the dangers that they may encounter when using the internet or their mobile phone. Parents who responded to the inspection questionnaire, Parent View, also agreed that their children felt safe at school. One parent summed up the view of many others by explaining that her children 'feel safe and secure and are well looked after'.

Inspection findings

- There is a very strong family feel to this school which is appreciated by all members of its community. This impressive ethos is based firmly on 'respect', which is one of the school's values. As one parent explained, 'this is pervasive throughout the school'.
- Pupils enjoy very positive relationships with the adults who work in school and develop into confident learners. This is reflected not only in their positive attitudes to learning but also in their involvement and contribution to extra-curricular activities, such as sporting events, festivals and competitions.
- Pupils are extremely courteous and well behaved. As well as reflecting the school values in all that they do, they have developed an age-appropriate

understanding of British values. For example, by using the basic principles of democracy, they agree on class rules and sensibly take on a wide range of responsibilities.

- The 'Reception partner' system, which involves Year 6 pupils befriending the new starters, promotes a strong bond between the youngest and oldest children. Pupils work well across year groups when they are involved in special events such as writing weeks, when they work together on different themes.
- The school environment is stimulating and reflects the exciting curriculum that your teachers plan. Pupils develop their artistic skills well and learn to recognise the differing styles of famous artists such as Kandinsky. Your teachers bring learning alive by using the topics as a vehicle to teach key skills. For example, Year 5 used their topic about Greek mythology to support their creative writing and extend their vocabulary. Year 6 were consolidating a grammar skill when writing about life during Victorian times.
- The vast majority of children start Northleaze as confident young learners who have gained experience of speaking, listening, and interacting with each other well prior to coming to school. They make steady progress through their Reception Year and are well prepared for Year 1. A high proportion of children reached the expected standard at the end of Reception in the most recent assessments.
- Results in the Year 1 phonics check have varied over the past few years but this relates to differences in the cohorts. In the 2015 Year 1 phonics check, there were a higher proportion of summer-born children who had specific learning difficulties and this was reflected in a drop in the proportion of pupils who met the expected levels. Following extensive intervention, those pupils successfully met the expected level in Year 2. The most recent 2016 Year 1 phonics checks indicate that most pupils have gained a secure understanding of letters and the sounds that they make.
- Results from the 2016 teacher assessments at the end of Year 2 indicate that one third of the pupils were working at a greater depth than expected in reading and mathematics. This indicates that steady progress has been maintained since they started key stage 1. Nevertheless, very few pupils were assessed to be working at a greater depth in writing.
- Pupils make accelerated progress in reading as they move through key stage 2. This was reflected in the most recent 2016 Year 6 national reading tests, where all pupils reached the expected national standards. An average proportion of the most able pupils attained the higher than expected standard. Pupils made good progress in reading through key stage 2 because of the increased opportunities to boost their reading stamina through the provision of a wider range of books.
- In the most recent Year 6 writing assessments a high proportion of pupils reached the expected standard. A significant proportion attained the higher than expected standard.
- You and your leadership team, including governors, are fully aware that not all pupils in key stages 1 and 2 are making the progress they are capable of in writing. Teachers are helping pupils to accelerate the progress they make in writing by raising expectations. Pupils are also developing a better

understanding of how to use their secure grammar and punctuation skills when they write for different purposes. A consistent approach to the teaching of spelling has been introduced, and those pupils who find this a challenge are given individual aids to help them.

- In the most recent Year 6 mathematics tests, a high proportion of pupils reached the expected standard. However, only a small proportion reached the higher than expected standard. You and your leadership team, including governors, know that progress in mathematics through key stage 2 needs to be accelerated for all groups of pupils, including the most able. You and your leadership team have identified that pupils need to deepen their mathematical skills and concepts by making more use of visual and practical resources to support their learning. This is not yet a common feature of all mathematics lessons. This results in not all pupils being fully involved in tackling or solving a problem.
- There are relatively few pupils who are eligible for pupil premium funding. In the most recent national tests, the most able disadvantaged pupils achieved well by reaching a higher than expected standard in reading and mathematics.
- Pupils eligible for extra funding are supported well both individually and in groups. In particular, they are given extra help with their spelling and writing skills. This has helped to diminish the gap between them and their peers.
- Pupils who have special educational needs and/or disabilities receive specialist support which enables them to be fully involved in the life of the school and to access the learning that meets their needs.
- Governors are very involved in the life of the school and are particularly proud of its strong ethos. They use their professional expertise well to challenge the work of the school.

Next steps for the school

Leaders and those responsible for governance should ensure that:

- national test results are swiftly analysed so that differences in pupils' progress can be spotted quickly and any action required to tackle weaknesses is taken without delay
- all teachers use practical resources and visual aids to help pupils explore and gain a deeper understanding of mathematical concepts and skills.

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 North Somerset. This letter will be published on the Ofsted website.

Yours sincerely

Lorna Brackstone
Her Majesty's Inspector

Information about the inspection

I met with you and we discussed the school's self-evaluation, information about the progress pupils were making and improvements since the last inspection. I also held discussions with other middle and senior leaders, and eight governors. We visited all the classes together, observed the Reception children out at play, and looked at some of the pupils' books. We also looked at the out-going Year 6 books and some from the current Year 6 class. I heard four pupils from Years 3 and 4 read. I met with six Year 6 pupils and talked to them about school life. I looked at the 73 responses from the 'Parent View' questionnaire. I considered the comments that had been submitted and any other correspondence I received from parents during the inspection.