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Mr M Jory
Headteacher
Draycott and Rodney Stoke Church of England First School
School Lane
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Dear Mr Jory

Short inspection of Draycott and Rodney Stoke Church of England First School

Following my visit to the school on 8 October 2015 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 March 2011.

This school continues to be good.

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

- There has been a freshness of approach in the leadership of the school since the formation of the Mendip Edge Federation, which includes three other local schools, and your appointment just over a year ago. In partnership with the leaders and managers within the federation and the joint governing body, you demonstrate a strong desire to ensure that pupils receive the best possible education.
- The school is a very friendly and welcoming place where everyone is treated with respect and consideration. There is a strong sense of community, with the school being very much part of village life. The atmosphere created by you, your staff and governors is extremely conducive to learning. Classrooms are bright and attractive with pupils' work proudly displayed. There is a 'real buzz' in lessons, with activities planned that interest and excite the pupils. Pupils have very positive attitudes to learning and soak up the good-quality education they receive. Strong partnerships shared between home and school ensure that everyone is working together for the best interests of the children. A parent explained that 'teaching staff encourage positive behaviour and create a

welcoming environment which enables my child to learn and feel cared for at school'.

- At the time of the last inspection the school was asked to improve the pupils' spelling, punctuation and handwriting. Teachers have raised their expectations that pupils write in a neat and legible style. Pupils complete weekly handwriting sessions which focus on improving the formation of letter shapes. Day-to-day work is checked to make sure that it is written neatly and legibly.
- Successful methods have been introduced to help pupils remember how to use punctuation accurately. Captions are displayed on learning boards. These displays reinforce techniques and act as reminders for the pupils. Any mistakes in punctuation are quickly picked up when teachers mark pupils' work. Pupils know that any inaccuracies are expected to be corrected and remembered for future use.
- The last inspection report highlighted that pupils were not having enough opportunities to apply their reading skills. Pupils now read more widely and use their knowledge of letters and sounds to investigate the different themes they are learning about. For example, pupils in Years 3 and 4 have used the story 'Stig of the Dump' to start off their study of life in stone-age Britain. They have accessed books from the non-fiction library to find out information about Stonehenge and used the knowledge they gained to make models at home.
- It was highlighted in the last inspection report that pupils in Year 3 were not always building on the progress they had made in Year 2. Improved transition arrangements between Years 2 and 3 have ensured that pupils' progress is much more even across the school. You have achieved this by carefully checking and tracking their progress and raising teacher expectations of what they are capable of doing.
- Since the last inspection outcomes for pupils remain strong. There are no gaps in the attainment between those who are disadvantaged and those who are not. However, you are fully aware that the most-able pupils do not always achieve the highest levels they are capable of and boys do not do as well in their writing as the girls. You are tackling these issues by keeping a close eye on the progress they are making and giving them extra support and challenge when required.

Safeguarding is effective.

- You and your leadership team have ensured that all safeguarding arrangements are fit for purpose and records are maintained. You create a positive culture and ethos and ensure that all staff receive regular training. You have recently attended training on the government's approach to the prevention of extremism and are shortly to share this with staff. Pupils report that school is a safe and comfortable place to be. They know that if they are worried or concerned there is always an adult they can go to for help. Pupils have a good understanding of e-safety, knowing that when using the internet they must 'think, think, think, before they click, click, click'!

Inspection findings

- You and your governors have a secure understanding of the strengths of the school and the areas which need further development. Improvement plans are detailed with clear strategies highlighted for action.
- Governors are very supportive and provide a good level of challenge. Recent changes to the staffing structure were carefully made to ensure that the needs of the pupils in the school are at the forefront of decisions.
- The performance of staff is rigorously checked and evaluated by leaders and governors. You have supported school improvement by ensuring that teaching staff receive training to support the needs of the pupils. For example, teaching assistants have received additional training to help them teach the sounds that letters make and teachers have attended courses to help the pupils develop their punctuation skills.
- By working within the federation to moderate pupils' work, you are able to check that your teachers have an accurate understanding of the progress that their pupils make. You can also compare the standards of work that pupils are producing with those in other local schools.
- The way in which you teach different subjects through the use of a single theme ensures that the pupils are engaged in their work and make links to their learning in other subjects. The Great Fire of London has ignited the pupils' interest in Years 1 and 2. Making cakes, and retrieving them from the oven just before they burnt, helped pupils understand how a fire can start.
- Pupils are well behaved and are eager learners. They love coming to school and enjoy the challenges that their teachers set for them. Pupils fully understand the marking policy that their teachers use and speak enthusiastically of the rewards they receive if they consistently get their spellings correct.
- The most-able pupils do not consistently achieve as well as they could because they are not always fully challenged with their learning. At times, pupils are required to do more of the same work they have already done instead of widening and deepening their knowledge. Occasionally tasks are given which require only a limited response. This reduces the pupils' opportunities to extend their learning.
- Although boys are encouraged to put pen to paper more frequently, they are not regularly putting sufficient detail into their writing and producing longer pieces of work.
- The school is very much at the heart of the local community and your school values are shared across the federation. You promote respect and tolerance and celebrate the work of famous British people from different walks of life such as Brunel and Shakespeare. Principles of democracy are taught through the selection of members for the school council.
- You ensure that all pupils attend school regularly by sharing a contract between home and school. This commits the parents to making sure they do not take holidays during term time. Consequently, attendance rates for all groups of pupils have improved.

- Parents are very pleased with the quality of education the school provides for their children. As one parent explained, 'the children leave having had a very rounded education'. They appreciate the improvements that have been made to the facilities and the closer working with the other schools within the federation.

Next steps for the school

Leaders and governors should ensure that:

- The most-able pupils are always given challenging work which deepens their understanding and results in higher levels of achievement.
- Boys are encouraged to write more frequently, in detail and at length.

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 held discussions with your middle leaders and two governors, including the Chair of the Governing Body. I also had a telephone conversation with your school improvement partner. We visited all the classes and looked at some pupils' books together. I met with a group of pupils and looked at comments made by staff on the inspection questionnaire. I looked at the survey results from 'Parent View' and considered comments and letters that I had received from parents.