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Mrs Hayley McGoldrick
Headteacher
Littledean Church of England Primary School
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Dear Mrs McGoldrick

Short inspection of Littledean Church of England Primary School

Following my visit to the school on 2 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 your school was judged to be good in May 2013.

This school continues to be good.

The leadership team has maintained the good quality of education in the school since the last inspection. Working in partnership with parents, the local church and members of the community, you have developed a very strong and positive atmosphere where everyone works well together for the benefit of the pupils. Parents appreciate the friendly, welcoming school where 'teachers go above and beyond to support and nurture' their children. Nearly all the parents who responded to the online inspection survey would highly recommend this school to other parents. As one parent explained, the school provides 'great memories for little people'.

The previous inspection report suggested that teachers should balance the time between revisiting work that the pupils already knew and helping them to find ways to extend their learning. This has been successfully accomplished because teachers now check what pupils know before a new unit of work is started, to avoid any repetition. Assessments check the progress that pupils have made from the start of new work. Teachers follow the school's agreed approach to marking which the pupils fully understand and find helpful.

The previous inspection report also highlighted the need to improve the way that pupils who were at risk of falling behind in their work were identified and supported in their learning. By introducing regular pupil progress review meetings and using a

new approach to tracking their achievement, you and your staff have a much clearer understanding of how well individuals are progressing.

Safeguarding is effective.

Pupils explain that they feel safe in school and appreciate the different ways in which they can share their worries or concerns with an adult. In particular, they are very appreciative of the support they receive from your family support worker who is always available for them to talk to about their problems and work through solutions with them. The pupils are very clear about how to keep safe when using new technologies and know that 'you don't put something in an email or a text that you would not say to someone's face'. They agree that pupils behave well and any occasional incident is dealt with appropriately by adults. All the parents who responded to the online inspection survey agree that their children feel safe in school and are happy attending it. As one parent explained, 'I know when I drop my children in school they are in safe hands.'

The leadership team has ensured that all safeguarding arrangements are fit for purpose. Staff and governors have completed all relevant training, including the prevention of extremism, radicalisation, female genital mutilation and child sexual exploitation. Pupils are kept safe on the school site and when they go out on school trips and visits to other schools. However, although processes for recruitment and vetting are thorough, the information gathered is not maintained systematically and is not easy to check.

Inspection findings

- My first line of enquiry was to find out why the proportion of pupils reaching the expected standard in the Year 1 phonics check had been declining over the past two years. You are confident that the introduction of a new way of teaching the sounds that letters make is having a positive impact on improving the pupils' phonic knowledge. They enjoy learning new rhymes and songs which help them to recall sounds and letter blends. By encouraging them to recognise their phonic sounds in words, and then write them in sentences, they are confidently applying their knowledge and consolidating their learning. Your teachers are also putting a greater emphasis on helping their pupils to distinguish between real words and incorrect words and this is preparing them well for the end of Year 1 phonics checks. The extra support that your English subject leader is giving those Year 2 pupils who did not reach the expected level in the phonics check at the end of Year 1 is helping them to accelerate their progress and gain more confidence in recognising and applying sounds.
- My second line of enquiry was to explore the reasons behind the decline over the past two years in the proportion of pupils reaching a good level of development at the end of their Reception Year. An increasing number of your children start school with limited speech and language and poorly developed social skills. A significant proportion have special educational needs and/or disabilities. You and your governors recognised that the early years provision was not fully meeting the changing needs of the children who attend the school. Following staff

turnover and a reorganisation of provision, coupled with advice and expertise from a local school, there has been an improvement in the progress being made by the current Reception children. In particular, your observations and analysis highlight the children's improved recognition and use of numbers. This is a result of your investment in new resources which are successfully supporting the children to visually recall the numbers one to 10 and use them to work out simple problems. The children's progress in reading and writing skills is also improving, because of the new approach to teaching phonics. Nevertheless, you are fully aware that, in order to further improve the outcomes for Reception children, the school needs to develop an outdoor learning area where they can extend their learning in all areas of development, particularly their physical and social experiences.

- Given that the published information for 2015/16 highlighted poor attendance rates for those pupils who were entitled to free school meals and those who had special educational needs and/or disabilities, my final line of enquiry was to find out what you were doing to tackle this. I discussed a number of individual case studies with you and your family support worker and it was clear that these absences were related to personal issues, particularly to the health and welfare of some pupils who regularly receive medical attention. It is clear that you and your family support worker keep a very close eye on the attendance of all your pupils. Any issues or concerns are immediately followed up and specialist help and advice are sought when required to ensure that the children involved are being kept safe and secure.

Next steps for the school

Leaders and those responsible for governance should ensure that:

- administrative systems for recording the recruitment and vetting of staff are maintained in a systematic way and regularly checked for consistency
- an outdoor area for Reception children is urgently established to provide the children with opportunities to develop their knowledge and skills in all areas of learning.

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

Lorna Brackstone
Her Majesty's Inspector

Information about the inspection

I met with you and we talked about the improvements that had been made since the last inspection. I also considered your self-evaluation of the school's effectiveness. I looked at all safeguarding records and explored your recruitment and vetting procedures. I held a discussion with your subject leaders for English and mathematics. I met with four governors, including the chair of the governing body. Together, we visited phonics lessons in Reception and in Years 1 and 2. We also visited lessons in Years 3 and 4 and Years 5 and 6. We also looked at some books together. I had a discussion with six Year 6 pupils. I met with one parent and considered the 17 responses submitted by parents through Parent View. I also considered 15 responses from the online staff questionnaire.