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Mr Beament
Interim Headteacher
Swainswick CE VC Primary School
Innox Lane
Upper Swainswick
Bath
BA1 8DB

Dear Mr Beament

Short inspection of Swainswick CE VC Primary School

Following my visit to the school on 23 February 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 November 2010.

This school continues to be good.

As a result of the appointment of interim senior leaders, the good quality of education in the school has been maintained since the previous inspection. During this period, class teachers have maintained a steady hold on provision and ensured that the pupils receive the best possible learning experiences. The strong community spirit of the school has been a secure anchor of support and has been supported very well by interim leaders, new governors and the local authority. The recent appointment of you as interim headteacher has led to much improvement. Governors describe you as a 'dynamic leader who has done an amazing job in a very short space of time'.

The school has a caring and friendly ethos which prides itself on setting its pupils on a 'lifelong learning journey'. It has a family feel to it and is very much at the heart of the community. This is what appeals to the parents who are delighted that their children attend this school. As one parent explained, 'The teachers and governors at Swainswick are working tirelessly, passionately and lovingly to ensure our little school is a safe, inspiring and friendly place for our children to spend their days.' The pupils talk about it being one big family and enjoy the friendships they make throughout the school.

Safeguarding is effective.

New policies and procedures, put in place in September 2015 by the interim headteachers, the newly appointed governors and the local authority have ensured that all safeguarding arrangements are fit for purpose. All staff and governors have received up-to-date training and know how to keep pupils safe and secure. They have attended training on the government's approach to the prevention of extremism and have a deeper understanding of the importance of e-safety. Pupils report that they feel safe in school. They know that if they are worried or concerned about something, there is always an adult they can go to to help them. The online 'Parent View' survey indicated that all parents feel that their children are safe at this school.

Inspection findings

- You, and the other interim leaders, have worked very effectively with the new governors and the local authority to ensure that the school's website meets statutory requirements and that all required policies and procedures are in place. In your short time as interim headteacher, you have accessed essential training for staff and provided opportunities for them to link more closely with other schools and widen their teaching experience.
- You have set up new procedures for managing the performance of teachers which ensure that they are rewarded for the quality of their performance and not just for their length of service. The checks you have made on the quality of teaching have swiftly identified areas which need refining.
- You have provided high-quality coaching and gained the confidence of the teaching staff. Parents have noticed that the 'morale of teachers has improved recently'. You have identified the need to establish the role of middle leaders in school development. You lead by example and provide guidance and support for them as they develop their new roles.
- The newly appointed governors bring with them a wealth of professional expertise. Governors have clear priorities for improvement and have a strong determination for the continuing success of this school. They are astute and use their skills very effectively to support and challenge you.
- Governors explain that they know exactly what is going on in school because you regularly brief them and welcome their challenge and support. Governors visit the school frequently and find out for themselves how well the school is functioning. You and the governors have an accurate understanding of the school's strengths and weaknesses.
- The number of pupils in each year group is too small to make national comparisons accurately. However, it is clear from published information and checks made on the progress that current pupils make that, despite changes in leadership, all pupils have continued to make good progress in all aspects of their learning.

- Letters and sounds are taught well and parents are supportive in hearing their children read at home. This helps the pupils attain high standards in reading. At the time of the previous inspection, the school was asked to make sure that the most-able pupils were adequately challenged. Teachers plan lessons that challenge the pupils and ignite their interest. They make best use of the small classes by setting individual and group challenges to meet all their differing needs.
- The very recent appointment of a part-time, interim teacher has had a strong impact on the re-organisation and management of provision for those pupils who have special educational needs. She has ensured that there is an up-to-date policy in place and has liaised closely with the Chair of the Governing Body and yourself. The interim leader for special educational needs has identified areas that require improvement and has prioritised them with clear timescales and deadlines. Of most significance is the development of a 'learning plan' which sets out the needs and requirements for each pupil who has special educational needs. This also clearly outlines how funding is being spent and who is accountable for the provision.
- Pupils are well behaved and are eager learners. They love coming to school and consider that they 'learn so much'. Pupils particularly appreciate the way that their teachers make learning fun through the different topics and themes they plan. For example, trips out of school to relive what life was like during the Second World War in the Bath Blitz. They enjoy theatre visits and make frequent use of the local woods to support their learning. Keeping a shipwreck diary, when they study different islands, is a firm favourite with the older pupils who enjoy using their writing skills imaginatively.
- You have introduced rigorous systems to check that all pupils attend school regularly. Any broken attendance is carefully explored and action plans are put into place to support parents.
- At the time of the previous inspection, the school was asked to help the pupils have a better awareness of life in other countries. Links with a school in Uganda and fund-raising activities to support national disasters have given the pupils a broader understanding of life outside the United Kingdom.
- British values very much permeate through the foundations of this small rural school. Pupils and parents 'feel part of a community' which is enriched through its strong links with the church. Pupils have a strong sense of community spirit and show great respect for each other. They fully adhere to the school rules and know what types of behaviour are not acceptable. Principles of democracy are taught by voting pupils onto the school council and the eco council. These councils are used well to hear the views of the pupils. Suggestions made are carefully listened to and adopted by school leaders where appropriate.
- Parents are very happy with the education that their children receive. As one parent reported, 'I can't thank the staff at Swainswick enough for their encouragement, attention and inspiration they have shown my child.' They are pleased that communication has improved recently and that 'parents are being listened to and actions implemented'.

Next steps for the school

Leaders and governors should ensure that they:

- develop the role of middle leaders to support and drive forward whole-school improvement
- embed and consolidate all the new systems and policies that have been put in place over the past few months to ensure that standards are maintained and improved further.

I am copying this letter to the Chair of the Governing Body, the Director of Education for the Diocese of Bath and Wells and the Director of Children’s Services for Bath and North East Somerset. This letter will be published on the Ofsted website.

Yours sincerely

Lorna Brackstone
Her Majesty’s Inspector

Information about the inspection

At the time of this visit, the substantive headteacher had been absent for six months. Two local headteachers supported the school in an interim capacity, at the start of the academic year during September and October 2015. At the beginning of November 2015, an interim headteacher was appointed. Most governors have been appointed since September 2015.

I met with you and we discussed the recent improvements made to safeguarding policies and procedures. I considered the school’s self-evaluation, the development plan and information about the progress pupils were making. In particular, I looked at the safeguarding policies and procedures in detail and considered the progress being made by those pupils who have special educational needs. I held discussions with your middle leaders and four governors, including the Chair of the Governing Body. I also met with a senior officer from the local authority and had a telephone conversation with the local authority designated officer for safeguarding. We visited all the classes together and looked at pupils’ books. I observed the pupils at play when they arrived at school and informally met with a group. I looked at the nine responses made by staff on the online inspection questionnaire. I met with parents at the start of the school day and reviewed the 44 survey responses on ‘Parent View’. I also considered any comments that they had submitted.