

Ofsted  
Piccadilly Gate  
Store Street  
Manchester  
M1 2WD

T 0300 123 4234  
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Mrs Julie Norman  
Executive Headteacher  
Crowcombe C of E VA Primary School  
Crowcombe  
Taunton  
Somerset  
TA4 4AA

Dear Mrs Norman

### **Short inspection of Crowcombe C of E VA Primary School**

Following my visit to the school on 5 March 2018, 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 2013.

Based on the evidence gathered during this short inspection, I have identified some priorities for improvement which I advise the school to address. In light of these priorities, the school's next inspection will be a full section 5 inspection. **There is no change to the school's current overall effectiveness grade of good as a result of this inspection.**

You took up appointment as executive headteacher of Crowcombe and Stogumber primary schools in 2014. You have worked determinedly to bring about some notable improvements to the school. Together with staff and governors, you ensure that the school provides a happy, safe and inclusive environment for all pupils. Central to the school's work is an exciting curriculum which offers a range of high-quality experiences for the pupils, such as outdoor learning and musical events. Pupils are proud of their school and say that they enjoy their learning. This is reflected in much-improved attendance, which is now at least in line with the national average.

There have been a number of staff changes since the last inspection. Staff are proud to work at the school and value the support and guidance you provide.

You maintain effective lines of communication with parents and carers. Parents speak positively about the approachability of staff, and they value the parent workshops. The vast majority of parents who responded to the online questionnaire, Parent View, said that they would recommend the school to another parent. This is reflected in the increased number of pupils on roll. Crowcombe is a growing school. Since the previous inspection, governors have taken on the management of the pre-school.

At the previous inspection, you were asked to make improvements to pupils' writing. Your work in this respect has been successful in part. Teachers ensure that there are plentiful opportunities for pupils to write for a range of purposes. Pupils' attitudes towards writing have improved. However, you rightly recognise that common errors in spelling, punctuation and grammar, particularly in key stage 2, are still barriers for some pupils to make the progress they are capable of.

### **Safeguarding is effective.**

You and your team have created a strong culture of safeguarding in the school. Pupils' well-being is a priority. The school's arrangements for checking that staff are suitable to work with children are thorough. Staff understand and follow the school's procedures to keep pupils safe, and are vigilant in reporting concerns. You keep comprehensive records, work closely with external agencies and are quick to challenge where necessary. Your uncompromising drive ensures that pupils and their families receive the support they need.

Staff know pupils well and are quick to provide support to help them overcome personal difficulties. Pupils are well supported, and the school provides high-quality pastoral care, including for pupils who join the school late in key stage 2. Consequently, pupils settle into school routines quickly. Pupils say that they feel safe and they know how to keep themselves safe. They are confident that bullying rarely happens. Pupils express confidence in all staff to deal with any worries or fall-outs that may occur. In addition, they find the online system for reporting any concerns to teachers helpful. Pupils' behaviour closely reflects the school's values, showing tolerance, respect and kindness.

### **Inspection findings**

- My first key line of enquiry focused on the effectiveness of teaching, learning and assessment in mathematics, particularly for middle- and high-attaining pupils. This is because, over the last two years, no pupil at key stage 2 has achieved the higher standard in mathematics. The leader for mathematics is passionate about her subject and has taken action to support teachers to improve their subject knowledge and planning. She has introduced an approach which is starting to more rapidly develop pupils' calculation skills.
- The governing body makes appropriate use of expertise to check on the school's work to improve outcomes in mathematics. However, the current action plan is not sufficiently linked to pupils' outcomes. Consequently, it is difficult for leaders and governors to ascertain the impact of actions to improve. The mathematics leader has worked with a local authority adviser to review the improvement plan in mathematics. We agreed that there is still some work to do to ensure that plans are sufficiently robust to enable leaders and governors to respond promptly to relative weaknesses.
- Work that we looked at in pupils' books showed that sometimes teachers do not move pupils' learning on quickly enough. Sometimes pupils repeat activities unnecessarily. Consequently, their progress slows. The school's information on

pupils' progress over the last year is showing encouraging signs of improvement for some pupils. However, the work to develop pupils' mathematical thinking, reasoning and problem-solving is not yet consistent across key stage 2. As a result, some middle-attaining and the most able pupils are not challenged sufficiently to reach the highest standards.

- Next, I looked at the effectiveness of the teaching of writing. Historically, boys have not achieved as well as girls in writing at both key stages 1 and 2. Work in current pupils' books shows that this remains an area for leaders to continue to focus on.
- Leaders have previously identified spelling, punctuation and grammar as an area to develop. The new leader for English, who joined the school in September 2017, has implemented a new approach to teaching spelling. We agreed that it is too early to see the impact of this work.
- Pupils' work in books across key stages 1 and 2 shows that, although boys reached the expected standard in their phonics checks, they do not consistently apply this knowledge in their writing. Inaccuracies are more prominent across key stage 2. As with mathematics, we agreed the school needs to refine plans so that they are more closely focused on evaluating the effectiveness of actions in light of the impact they have on raising pupils' outcomes.
- Teachers are beginning to provide more opportunities for pupils to write in different subjects of the curriculum so that pupils can practise and apply their skills more regularly and readily. This is helping pupils to develop a rich vocabulary and choice of language to engage the reader. However, leaders recognise the need to raise expectations to improve the technical aspects of boys' writing in particular.
- Finally, I looked at the provision to support those pupils who have special educational needs and/or disabilities. Leaders demonstrate a strong commitment to removing barriers to learning. This work is most successful in the support for pupils who have social and emotional needs. In addition, the school's investment in an assistant who supports pupils' emotional literacy has proved effective. Consequently, pupils feel safe, develop in confidence and are ready for learning.

### **Next steps for the school**

Leaders and those responsible for governance should ensure that:

- plans for improvement are linked sufficiently to precise information gained from tracking pupils' progress so that leaders and governors can gauge the effectiveness of actions and make swift changes where necessary to increase rates of pupils' progress
- there is consistency in the teaching of mathematics across key stage 2 which is precisely matched to pupils' needs, to ensure that more middle- and high-prior attaining pupils make the progress they should

- the teaching of spelling, punctuation and grammar continues to improve so that a greater proportion of pupils, particularly key stage 2 boys, write with the accuracy expected for their age.

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

Yours sincerely

Tracy Hannon  
**Her Majesty's Inspector**

### **Information about the inspection**

We met at the beginning of the day to agree a timetable and activities for inspection. I spoke with you, other school leaders and with two members of the governing body. I also held a telephone conversation with a representative from the local authority. I made visits to lessons in both Crowcombe and Stogumber schools to observe pupils' learning and to scrutinise their work. Some of these visits were made jointly with you, and on others I was accompanied by a member of the governing body. I also conducted a scrutiny of pupils' writing and mathematics books with subject leaders.

I considered a range of documentary evidence, which included the school's self-evaluation, local authority reports, school development plans and school performance information. I also looked at your safeguarding documentation.

In addition, I took into account 20 responses to the Parent View online survey. I gathered the views of staff through an online questionnaire and through discussions during the inspection. I also talked to pupils in lessons and at break and lunchtimes to listen to their views of the school.