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Mr Jonathan Arnold, Head of School
Mr Martin Harding, Executive Headteacher
Doddyscombsleigh Primary School
Doddyscombsleigh
Exeter
Devon
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Dear Mr Arnold and Mr Harding

Short inspection of Doddyscombsleigh Primary School

Following my visit to the school on 13 September 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 the school was judged to be good in September 2013.

This school continues to be good.

The leadership team has maintained the good quality of education in the school since the last inspection and the school has continued to improve. Following the retirement of the headteacher in 2016, links were forged with the United Schools Federation. This enabled the head of school to be appointed through a management partnership arrangement.

You, the governors and staff are ambitious for the future of the school. You are committed to providing the very best learning experiences for pupils so they can achieve the highest standards. By developing links with schools in the federation, you have enabled teachers to work with others who teach the same year groups. Through professional dialogue and the sharing of best practice they have refined the accuracy with which they assess pupils' skills and knowledge. This has ensured that the planning of activities in lessons is tightly matched to individual pupils' needs. In addition, you have encouraged and enabled staff to develop whole-school approaches, for example in the way reading is taught. As a result of these actions, pupils' learning is moving on at a faster rate than in previous years. You have firmly established a culture of high expectations for all and have raised the level of challenge for pupils. More pupils achieved the higher standard in reading, writing and mathematics this year and you have effective plans in place to ensure that this improvement continues.

Your honest and accurate evaluation of the school's performance is understood by staff and governors. You identify precisely what the school does well and what

needs to be improved. Confidence in the school is high because you and your governors successfully engaged staff, pupils and parents on the school's journey of improvement.

You place a strong emphasis on promoting 'pupils' rights' such as the 'right to be listened to', and the 'right to learn'. These principles are integral to the decisions you make and support pupils' academic and personal development very well. Pupils enjoy school very much and work hard. The community values the school. 'It is a wonderful, welcoming and friendly place in which our children can learn well' typified many of the views expressed by parents during the inspection. You and your staff support pupils to develop effective learning habits, which, together with a rich curriculum that includes extensive enrichment opportunities, serves pupils well.

You have successfully tackled the issues from the last inspection. By helping pupils to understand 'what makes a good learner', they have developed resilience. They know that making errors is part of the learning process and have the confidence to think, and make decisions for themselves. The feedback pupils receive from their teachers has been refined to provide them with personalised guidance. As a result, pupils understand their own 'learning pathway' towards a larger and longer-term learning goal. For example, having learned the features of explanation texts, pupils in Year 2 were able to write at length to explain why Mary Anning is an important person in history.

Safeguarding is effective.

You and your governors have ensured that all safeguarding arrangements are fit for purpose and records are detailed and well maintained. All those involved in the school community are committed to keeping pupils safe. Information provided for staff and parents is readily available and regularly updated. The school's commitment to ensuring that pupils' rights are promoted supports the development of a vigilant culture where pupils' welfare and safety are paramount. Staff and governors keep up to date with training. They regularly explore different safeguarding scenarios they could encounter, to ensure that they remain confident and clear about what to do if they have a concern.

You place a strong emphasis on pupils' personal development and help pupils to develop supportive friendships and to manage personal risk well. They talk confidently about how to stay safe when using a variety of modern technologies such as the internet, mobile phones and social media. Pupils feel safe at school and are confident they would be listened to and supported to sort out any issues should they arise. A typical view of pupils included, 'teachers make sure we feel comfortable and safe'. A strong family feel pervades the school and parents express great confidence in what they describe as the school's 'fantastic' care and welfare provision for pupils. As one parent noted, 'children are respected so respect the staff and know that they can approach them for any issues they may have, and will never feel belittled or rejected'. Pupils' exemplary behaviour, and above-average attendance, reflect the confidence they have that they are safe at school and looked after very well.

Inspection findings

- Together, we agreed to explore how teaching is successfully ensuring that boys and girls are challenged enough to make good progress in reading and mathematics. Teachers have embraced the training and support they have accessed through their links with the United Schools Federation. Improving procedures for checking how well pupils are doing has helped teachers to match work more precisely to pupils' needs. Across all year groups, activities provide effective challenge that ensures that pupils make good, and, for some, rapid progress. Pupils demonstrate a keenness to challenge themselves. For example, Year 6 pupils asked to apply their knowledge of equivalent fractions and percentages when solving problems in mathematics.
- Teachers consider pupils' interests carefully when planning so pupils' engagement in lessons is high. Boys and girls from similar starting points achieve equally well in reading and mathematics. Pupils talk confidently with their teachers so they have a good understanding of what they are learning, and how to develop and improve their knowledge and skills. They understand how their learning in reading and mathematics can support their understanding in other subjects. You recognise that the approaches you use need to be secured across the school, so pupils' progress improves further and more reach the higher standard in reading and mathematics.
- We also agreed to investigate how leaders have secured the improvement in pupils' writing seen this year. Better assessment practice has resulted in planning that focuses sharply on moving pupils' learning forwards at a good pace. Teachers vary the structure of lessons and make good use of resources to hold pupils' interest. For example, short film clips stimulate pupils' interest and curiosity, and visits provide experiences that pupils can call on, to add richness to their written work. The school's self-evaluation identified that some forms of writing were not being given sufficient attention to allow pupils to develop their skills securely. You have taken steps to address this quickly. As a result, pupils show their overall competence as writers and demonstrate greater understanding of how different types of writing are needed in different circumstances. Although the current approach is securing faster pupil progress in writing, you recognise there is room for further improvement so even more pupils reach the higher standard.
- The final aspect we agreed to explore looked at how leadership, including governance, challenges teaching and learning to secure the best possible outcomes for pupils. You and your governors are forward looking, but are also tightly focused on ensuring that pupils currently at the school receive the best possible education. The school's self-evaluation procedures are robust and the improvement planning process responds quickly to address any areas that need attention. Governors rigorously check how well the school is progressing and holds leaders to account. Information provided for parents welcomes their involvement as partners in their children's education. Governors recognise that they need to keep a closer check on the school's website to ensure that it always fully complies with statutory requirements, so parents have easy access to key

documents and information. Support provided through the United Schools Federation has been valuable as it has served to challenge but also assist the school on its improvement journey. Governors make effective use of work with colleagues within the federation and support teachers to access quality training. Teaching has improved and resulted in an increasing number of pupils making good or rapid progress in their learning. There is no complacency, and you and your governors continue to work diligently to secure the school's long-term future.

Next steps for the school

Leaders and those responsible for governance should ensure that:

- teaching enables even more pupils to make rapid progress and reach the higher standards in reading, writing and mathematics that they are capable of.

I am copying this letter to the chair of the governing body, the regional schools commissioner and the director of children's services for Devon. This letter will be published on the Ofsted website.

Yours sincerely

Alison Cogher
Ofsted Inspector

Information about the inspection

During the inspection, I held meetings with you and two members of the governing body, including the chair of the governing body (designate). We explored the progress made by the school since the last inspection, the impact of the involvement of the United Schools Federation and the vision for the school's future. I spoke with parents and pupils and had a telephone conversation with a representative of the local authority. With the head of school, I visited lessons and examined a sample of work in pupils' books and information collected by the school about pupils' progress. I examined a range of documentary evidence, which included the school's self-evaluation and school improvement plan, and attendance and safeguarding information. In addition, I took account of the 18 responses to Ofsted's online Parent View survey.