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Mr Andrew Ferguson
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Dear Mr Ferguson

Short inspection of Bussage Church of England Primary School

Following my visit to the school on 6 December 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 January 2012.

This school continues to be good.

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

You and the governing body have implemented plans that provide the support and challenge necessary for pupils to continue to make good progress. You have kept abreast of government changes, such as the new assessments, and have responded appropriately so pupils can succeed.

Since the last inspection, the school has developed an effective curriculum which engages and excites pupils and enables them to achieve well. Activities are interesting, memorable and challenging for all groups of pupils. The school curriculum plan has clear, meaningful links which support pupil progress effectively.

Cross-curricular thematic topics embrace a range of subjects that help the pupils have an understanding of the wider world and its geography, science and history. For example, Year 6 pupils visited the living rainforest in Berkshire as part of their learning about Brazil and the rainforests. There are strong links with a school in Kenya and you are forging new links with schools in Turkey, Portugal, Greece and France.

Another area for you to develop from the previous inspection was the use of regular assessments of what pupils know and understand. Assessment is now an ongoing feature within teaching. This prepares pupils well for the Year 6 national assessments.

Pupils are encouraged to take on leadership responsibilities in one of four ministries: learning, values, charity and eco. A school Prime Minister and deputy are elected by the pupils after a rigorous process. These pupils lead the school parliament well and their views are heard and recognised by the staff and governors. Learning detectives help in monitoring the Bussage Learning Power (BLP) by visiting lessons, conducting surveys and comparing views with pupils from three other local primary schools. The values ambassadors lead acts of worship and there are sports leaders who support younger pupils suitably at playtime. These democratic leadership opportunities are an important part of school life and introduce the pupils to British values in a meaningful way.

You are aware that some of the most able pupils did not achieve their full potential in the assessments in 2016. You are raising expectations of staff in light of the demands of the new national curriculum, particularly in mathematics for the most able and those of middle ability. The individual needs of disadvantaged pupils are known more accurately. Teaching assistants work closely alongside these pupils and provide helpful support to ensure that they make good gains in their learning in class and over time.

Safeguarding is effective.

The leadership team has ensured that all safeguarding arrangements are fit for purpose and child protection records are detailed and of high quality. The safeguarding policy is up to date but the school leaders were slow in putting the most recent DfE guidelines on the website. Staff have been suitably trained in the most recent changes to safeguarding procedures. Pupils feel safe and secure in school.

Inspection findings

- The headteacher and governors are rigorous in their analysis of key stage 2 outcomes. Following the disappointing results in mathematics in 2016, pupils' answers were scrutinised closely to identify common areas of misunderstanding. Teaching was better focused on the most important weaknesses in learning. As a result, the teaching of calculations and fractions is now taught more effectively. Pupils are becoming more adept at reasoning and solving problems as they progress from year to year.
- Governors have a strong understanding of school outcome information. They ask searching questions of the headteacher to identify what is working well and what must be improved. They provide the necessary support and challenge to make sure the school remains good and the quality of education continually improves. They evaluate their own work as well as that of the school leaders accurately. Governors involve themselves in an appropriately strategic way by reviewing plans and actions so that targets are met and initiatives make a difference.
- The headteacher is a local leader of education, which has enabled the school to be involved in successful partnerships. This provides extra leadership capacity and expertise within the school. The headteacher, on behalf of the local teaching school, is leading on the recruitment of 10 prospective primary teachers in the

school direct programme in association with Bath Spa University. This should help alleviate the difficulties of teacher recruitment.

- The moderation of work across the local primary schools encourages teachers to share resources and ideas which benefit the pupils in their learning. The work ensures that judgements made about pupils' attainment and progress are secure.
- The curriculum is broad and balanced. There is a sequential framework that develops pupils' basic skills and deepens their knowledge and understanding as they move from year to year.
- Teachers' subject knowledge is good. This, alongside the good relationships between pupils and teachers, is an important strength. Pupils are comfortable to ask questions to consolidate and extend their learning. Such dialogue helps them to learn effectively.
- In 2016, the most able mathematicians achieved the expected level of progress but a few did not achieve at the highest levels in mathematics because they had difficulty solving mathematical problems. Teachers are now providing more opportunities for all pupils, including the most able, to solve problems, reason and apply their depth of knowledge in a variety of mathematical situations.
- Pupils are safe and are happy at school. They are confident and articulate and enjoy speaking with visitors. They show pride in their work and do all of the tasks asked of them willingly.
- Pupils read regularly. The reading of the most able pupils is fluent and they can articulate their opinions about the texts well. They have good comprehension skills. Pupils with lower ability are resilient and use phonetic methods effectively to work out more difficult words. Their understanding of the texts is sound.
- Classrooms reflect the pupils' learning. The linking of subjects and practical activities ensures that work is meaningful and helps to embed learning well. For example, pupils wrote formal business letters to an international hotel chain explaining the ecological impact of building a hotel in Peru's rainforest.
- The funding for pupils with special educational needs and/or disabilities is spent well. Progress of these pupils is monitored constantly and effective extra support is provided to make sure that those with specific needs or those that are falling behind catch up quickly.
- The barriers to learning which are holding back disadvantaged pupils' aspirations and limiting their performance have not been properly evaluated. If this was done, it would identify the actions required to improve disadvantaged pupils' academic and personal development. Such analysis would help target pupil premium funding more effectively than at present.
- Parents are very supportive of the school. Among the many comments received, this one sums up the feelings of the majority: 'My eldest child is in Year 6 and I wouldn't have wanted him to go anywhere else.'

Next steps for the school

Leaders and those responsible for governance should ensure that:

- the most able and middle-ability pupils achieve their full potential and gain results at a high standard in mathematics
- the main barriers to educational achievement for the school's disadvantaged

pupils are identified and government funding is used effectively to improve disadvantaged pupils' academic and personal development.

I am copying this letter to the chair of the governing body, the director of education for the Diocese of Gloucester and the director of children's services for Gloucestershire. This letter will be published on the Ofsted website.

Yours sincerely

Kathy Maddocks
Her Majesty's Inspector

Information about the inspection

The key lines of enquiry were:

- What have leaders and governors done to improve the quality of teaching and use of performance information, particularly in mathematics?
- What are leaders and governors doing to ensure that the pupil premium funding and funding for those with special educational needs and/or disabilities is having an impact on outcomes for the vulnerable pupils?
- How are leaders and governors ensuring that safeguarding is secure and pervades the culture of the school?

During the inspection, I met with you, leaders, governors, staff and pupils. I visited lessons to observe learning and listened to a most-able and a lower-ability Year 6 pupil read. I looked at the quality of the work in pupils' exercise books. I considered documentary evidence related to the impact of the school's work, including safeguarding. I took into account 41 responses to the Ofsted online survey, Parent View, and 16 comments written by parents.