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Mr Andrew Morley
Headteacher
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Dear Mr Morley

Short inspection of Burghill Community Academy

Following my visit to the school on 2 March 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 since the school converted to an academy on 1 May 2013. When its predecessor school was last inspected by Ofsted in May 2012, it was judged to be good overall.

This school continues to be good.

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

This is a warm and welcoming village primary school with strong community links, where staff, pupils, parents and governors work closely together. As one member of staff said, 'Burghill is a pleasure to work at. I feel part of a strong and valued team. We work within a wonderfully supportive community.' Staff are very supportive of the leaders, are proud to be part of the school, agree that pupils' behaviour is good and are confident that the school has improved since its last inspection. Leaders have made changes to move the school forward and are aware that some improvements are still needed. There are a number of clear strengths in this school, such as detailed knowledge of pupils' skills and additional support to help improve any weaknesses pupils have.

Pupils receive a good education at this school. They are rightly proud of their school and enjoy the exciting range of lessons, extra-curricular activities and trips which the staff organise. They particularly highlighted mathematics, art and drama as some of the lessons they enjoy. Pupils have the opportunity to join a range of clubs run by the school, such as Spanish, sports and learning to play the ukulele. As part of their work to teach creativity and give all pupils an equal opportunity to succeed, the school has achieved an Artsmark award and the Inclusion Quality Mark.

Since the previous inspection, a range of new staff have been appointed: the headteacher, senior teacher, two teachers, teaching assistants and new members of the governing body. This new staff team have embraced the National Curriculum and assessment changes and improved the quality of teaching. At the previous inspection, it was recommended that teaching should be improved by, for example, sharing good practice and marking work consistently in a way that shows pupils how they can enhance their work. The success of this is now evident in pupils' workbooks and staff are making effective use of the schools' marking and feedback policy.

The school works with other local schools and is part of the 'Activate' group. This enables best practice to be shared across the group and gives opportunities for all schools, especially the rural ones, to pool ideas and evaluate their provision. As the school is a stand-alone academy, there is room to develop this work further to improve the external support and challenge received.

School records show that the quality of teaching has improved as a result of training and performance management. Some previous inaccurate assessment practice in Year 2 has affected the published information of how much progress pupils make by the time they leave the school at the end of Year 6. Performance management and a re-organisation of teaching and learning have led to improved assessment and better pupil progress, particularly in mathematics. Leaders have carefully redesigned the curriculum in line with national changes, which is helping to improve pupils' progress in reading, writing and mathematics. Boys' progress is now in line with that of girls and sometimes above.

Approximately a quarter of the pupils have parents who serve in the armed forces. This proportion is much higher than most schools because of the nearby military base. Leaders work closely with service families and use additional government funding to support these pupils effectively. Some of this funding has been used to employ a learning mentor and to provide additional teaching and extra sports coaching to benefit these pupils.

The proportion of pupils who qualify for the pupil premium funding at the school is much lower than the national average. Therefore, a meaningful year-on-year comparison of these pupils' outcomes, compared to other pupils nationally, is not possible. Over time, assessment information shows that disadvantaged pupils typically achieve in line with and sometimes above that of other pupils in the school.

Safeguarding is effective.

Safeguarding arrangements meet the minimum statutory requirements. Leaders and governors ensure that staff training is up to date and any concerns that arise are fully reported. Staff and governors have been trained in child protection and the prevention of extremism. Pupils say they feel safe because they are cared for and staff resolve any issues they have. The school's website provides useful safeguarding information for parents. Leaders ensure that any pupil concerns are followed up thoroughly. Leaders and governors are aware that there are some aspects of safeguarding that can be tightened up to ensure that all staff are fully aware of the latest requirements.

Pupils' personal development, behaviour and welfare are strengths of the school, because pupils are respectful of each other and staff ensure that their social and emotional needs are met. Pupils enjoy school and say there are very few problems at playtimes because they get on well. Adults help to quickly resolve any rare disagreements that occur. Staff manage behaviour well through the strong spiritual, moral, social and cultural curriculum and teach pupils to respect and consider others carefully.

Inspection findings

- The culture of this school is one of teamwork, inclusion and improvement. The headteacher has made changes to improve teaching, introduce a new assessment system and ensure that pupils' needs are met. Consequently, pupil outcomes are usually in line with or above the national average in reading, writing and mathematics by the end of Year 6. However, this pattern fluctuates slightly each year due to the small number of pupils in each year group. Governors, staff, pupils and parents work together effectively to support and help the school to improve. For example, the school council and the parent, teacher and friends association both helped to raise funds to provide several new pieces of outdoor play equipment. Some aspects of leadership and management can be further improved by ensuring that a robust monitoring and evaluation procedure is in place.
- Teaching and pupil outcomes have improved in all year groups over time. For example, the proportion of pupils achieving the expected standard in phonics (letters and the sounds they make) by the end of Year 1 improved significantly to above the national average in 2014 and continued to improve in 2015. Pupil outcomes by the end of Year 2 improved to well above the national average in 2015. An increasing number of pupils achieved the higher standard (Level 3) in reading and mathematics at the end of Year 2 last year. Current assessment information and pupils' workbooks demonstrate that most pupils across the school are progressing well, especially in reading and mathematics. Leaders are aware that progress is slightly slower in writing and have put plans in place to further improve pupils' progress and outcomes in writing.
- All pupils are given an equal opportunity to succeed and there is no difference between the attainment of different pupil groups. For example, the outcomes for pupils whose parents serve in the armed forces are at least the same as other pupils in the school. Current assessment information shows that the majority of this group of pupils are making good progress, often above that of other pupils. Parents of these pupils warmly appreciate leaders' work to improve the care, support and impact on their children's progress. Case studies show that a few pupils have complex special educational needs and their progress has been slower. Leaders have put a range of support packages in place for these pupils and, as a result, more of their needs are now met. The school nurtures and caters for vulnerable pupils well, while recognising that there is more work which can be done to further improve their progress by the time they leave the school in Year 6.
- Teachers have recently improved their skills to check assessments are accurate

through internal and external training and close work with staff in other schools. Teaching assistants have received training to help close the attainment gaps for pupils in reading and mathematics. There is now a comprehensive programme in place to improve pupils' academic skills and support their social and emotional needs. Further time is needed to embed the changes made to assessments, in order to fully inform teaching and improve pupil outcomes.

- Since the last inspection, governance has been improved by creating sub-committees which oversee school improvement and resources. Governors know the strengths of the school and provide support for the headteacher to use school funds to employ additional staff for example. Governors visit the school and minutes of meetings show that although they ask questions, they do not yet hold the school fully to account. Governors work closely with the staff and the local area to develop the work of the school and its place within the community. Leaders and managers agree that governance could improve further by ensuring that a more strategic approach is used to fully support and challenge the school.
- Pupils were observed engaging in purposeful learning activities across the school. Pupils from all classes were completing mathematics problems in their 'house' groups as part of World Maths Day. This usually involved younger and older pupils working together in different zones to count items, find the matching number and solve challenges such as 'sudoku' problems. Later on, Year 3 and 4 pupils were seen completing a range of activities as part of a guided reading session. Year 5 pupils were having a thoughtful discussion about a Hindu 'Ahisma', where they carefully considered another culture. Year 6 pupils were observed working as a discrete group with their teacher to extend their knowledge of rounding decimal numbers and prepare for their end of year assessments. Individual pupils were working with teaching assistants, parent volunteers and a learning mentor to develop key skills such as reading. Pupils in all classes were keen to learn together in quiet, purposeful environments. Expectations were consistently high in all classrooms and there was clear evidence that staff are working hard to meet pupils' differing needs.
- The classrooms are bright, colourful and interesting places to learn. Most walls and corridors are decorated with interesting displays related to current cross-curricular topics. Pupils were observed enjoying playtime and appreciating the new play equipment. Pupils were keen to tell me how good their school is and how well staff support their learning and preparation for the next stage of their education.
- The school's latest parent questionnaire shows that the vast majority of parents are very supportive of the school and appreciative of the extra effort made by staff to ensure that their children are settled and progressing well. All the parents who spoke to me explained how impressed they are with the school because of the support provided for their children, and that staff are always available to talk to parents. Of the few problems that do arise, parents said the school addresses them quickly. Seven parents wrote a written response to Parent View (Ofsted's online questionnaire for parents) during the inspection, all of which were very positive. One parent said, 'The school has responded well to any concerns I have had. It has improved participation in sporting

tournaments, with football, tag rugby, cross country and swimming. I also feel the school teaches the children important values, including to respect other faiths and cultures.'

Next steps for the school

Leaders and governors should ensure that:

- a robust monitoring and evaluation system is developed to ensure that management procedures are followed thoroughly
- as a stand-alone academy, links are strengthened with other schools to improve the strategic aspect of leadership and management and further develop aspects such as governance
- best practice is developed and improvements to assessment procedures and the curriculum are embedded, to further inform teaching and improve pupil outcomes.

I am copying this letter to the Chair of the Governing Body, the Regional Schools Commissioner and the Director of Children's Services for Herefordshire County Council. This letter will be published on the Ofsted website.

Yours sincerely

Stuart Bellworthy
Her Majesty's Inspector

Information about the inspection

During the inspection I met with you, office staff and a group of governors. You and I observed teaching in all classrooms and additional support taking place in the afternoon. I looked at pupils' workbooks from across the school in a range of subjects to establish the progress and quality of pupils' work over time. Informal discussions were held with pupils and parents to gauge their views on the school. Not enough responses were received to Parent View to register, but parents' free-text comments were considered. Pupils' behaviour and attitudes were observed around the school and at playtimes. A wide range of documentation was also scrutinised, including the school's plans for improvement, external monitoring reports, records relating to behaviour, attendance and safeguarding, records of checks made by leaders and information on pupils' current progress and most recent outcomes.