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Alison McDonald
Director of Primaries
Beedon CE (Controlled) Primary School
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Dear Mrs McDonald

Short inspection of Beedon CE (Controlled) Primary School

Following my visit to the school on 2 November 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 2011.

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 small, happy and highly focused school. You have methodically set about improving school systems and processes, with pupils' needs firmly held at the centre. The school's motto of 'a love of life and learning' is fully promoted in all of its work. Parents praise you and the staff for developing an all-inclusive approach, valuing each child as an individual while promoting pupils' rapid acquisition of reading, writing and mathematics skills. Your vision based on creating a 'strong family ethos' permeates all aspects of the school's work. Pupils' learning and pastoral needs are understood well and relationships between staff and pupils are strong. You personally greet each pupil at the start of the day, aiding a smooth transition into school. In situ, pupils exhibit extremely positive attitudes towards learning; they are well mannered towards staff and each other and say that their lessons are engaging and fun.

Since the previous inspection and following your appointment in March 2014, you have methodically set about making considerable improvements. You and your governors have instigated well-judged changes to ensure that the long-term sustainability of this small school is secure. To that end, on 1 September 2016 Beedon Primary School federated with The Downs School and Compton Primary

School, joining The Downland Federation. At this time, the leadership structure also changed. The headteacher of The Downs School now oversees all three schools in his capacity as executive headteacher. You have changed roles from headteacher to director of primaries, working at both Beedon and Compton Primary School. The school's previous governing body federated to form one governing body across all three schools. You, the executive headteacher and governors all work well together; new roles and responsibilities are clearly understood. Collectively you have set about making further improvement. Although this is at an early stage, many aspects of the school's provision have strengthened and standards of achievement have risen. Pupils make good progress across the school in reading, writing and mathematics. Disadvantaged pupils and pupils who have special educational needs and/or disabilities achieve particularly well; most achieve the standards expected for their age in reading, writing and mathematics.

At the previous inspection, inspectors asked the school to raise achievement in the early years. Standards have risen steadily and more children start Year 1 with the skills and understanding typical for their age. In 2016, the proportion of children who achieved a good level of development at the end of their Reception Year was above that seen nationally. You were also asked to strengthen the quality of teaching in reading, as well as to raise standards in writing, particularly for the most able pupils. You have overhauled the school's reading resources, ensuring that reading materials are appealing and matched accurately to pupils' starting points. You have increased the variety of reading books, ensuring that there is a good range of fiction and non-fiction texts and that the school's books are appealing to pupils. Pupils enjoy reading and say that the reading materials in school are interesting. Staff have benefited from training and the teaching of phonics has improved. Standards are rising, with more pupils meeting the standard required in the Year 1 phonics check in 2016. All pupils who retook the check in Year 2 in 2016 met the required standard. The teaching of writing has also improved. You say that you have adopted a 'back to basics' approach in order to raise standards. Pupils now take greater pride in their work and standards of presentation are good. Pupils have more opportunities to write in a range of styles and for different purposes. The school's information shows that more pupils are working at a higher level than in the past. However, you rightly acknowledge that fully challenging the most able writers requires further development. Consequently, all staff have participated in very recent training across the federation, focused on enhancing the level of challenge provided to pupils in learning activities.

Safeguarding is effective.

The school's procedures for keeping pupils safe are extremely thorough. Leaders ensure that all staff are checked for their suitability to work with children. Governors have an extremely high level of expertise and use this to good effect. For example, adopting the West Berkshire model safeguarding policy, governors have ensured that it meets the school's requirements and that it complies with the latest government guidance. All staff, including those recently appointed, have received appropriate training. Governors, using their expertise to good effect, oversee safeguarding procedures rigorously. The governor with responsibility for

safeguarding meets regularly with the school's designated person to review specific aspects, offering high levels of challenge and support.

Health and safety procedures are equally systematic and statutory requirements are met well. The school's risk assessments cover a whole host of school activities in depth. The health and safety governor leaves no stone unturned when monitoring the effectiveness of school procedures. Meticulous checks on all aspects such as the management of asbestos, the school's fire evacuation procedures, the management of chemicals on-site and school security, ensure that all procedures and systems are robust.

Pupils feel safe and well cared for. They particularly highlight the exemplary levels of care they receive as a strength, particularly during playtimes. Pupils are quick to praise the attentiveness and vigilance of staff, especially, if from time to time minor medical attention is required. They state unequivocally that 'at Beedon everyone looks after each other'.

Inspection findings

- You accurately identify the school's strengths and weaknesses. School improvement planning is comprehensive and includes relevant actions. However, plans could be strengthened by making greater use of pupil performance information in order to evaluate the positive difference your actions are making to raising standards.
- You are determined that the information you gather about pupils' performance is accurate. Together with local schools, you regularly review pupils' work, particularly in writing, to ensure that performance information is accurate. Consequently, all staff have an accurate knowledge of how well pupils are learning.
- School leaders prioritise the continuous development of staff skills and expertise. They work closely with the local authority and the Downland Teaching Alliance (based at The Downs School) to ensure that training opportunities are well considered and match school priorities well. For example, training and attendance at meetings with the local authority 'phonics network group' have contributed to a significant rise in standards in recent times. Teachers are highly appreciative of the encouragement they receive from school leaders. As part of the newly formed federation, staff are afforded additional opportunities by training alongside outstanding practitioners from both new partner schools.
- Staff who are newly qualified or new to the school receive a thorough induction. Leaders ensure that new staff are fully briefed on all safeguarding matters, as well as accessing appropriate training to develop their skills. Staff feel very positive about the school's performance management systems, noting how they contribute well to their ongoing professional development.
- Officers from the local authority and diocese provide wise counsel to school leaders. Appropriate support, including the services of a national leader of education, have helped steer the school through some challenging times. As

a result, the school continues to flourish and standards continue to rise.

- Using your experience as a writing moderator for the local authority, you have set about raising standards purposefully. Pupils now have plentiful opportunities to write for a range of purposes including letters, stories and reports. Pupils enjoy writing tasks, particularly those that are linked to the wider curriculum. They are particularly proud of the letters they have written to Theresa May recently, advocating for greater tolerance in modern Britain. Most pupils write with a fluent, joined script and many told the inspector how proud they were of their penmanship awards.
- Pupils receive helpful feedback and are keen to improve their work. In lessons, teachers make regular checks effectively, such as exploring pupils' word choices and ideas. Pupils are quick to act on advice and consequently the quality of their work improves.
- Middle leaders plan appropriate actions to raise standards in their subjects. The school's English leader has led staff meetings to improve teachers' grammar subject knowledge. The leader has also implemented a new, well-considered grammar and spelling scheme of work. Leaders monitor standards closely by conducting regular book scrutinies. Standards in this aspect of English rose considerably in 2016, with all Year 6 pupils meeting the expected standard at the end of key stage 2. However, in 2016, no pupils exceeded the standard expected for their age.
- Pupils make good progress in reading, writing and mathematics, including disadvantaged pupils and pupils who have special educational needs and/or disabilities. More pupils are working at a higher standard than in the past. For example, in writing, pupils are making greater use of more complex punctuation and grammatical devices to improve the quality of their work. However, there is still opportunity to accelerate progress further, particularly for the most able pupils in writing.
- Pupils' learning needs are met well and they make good progress. Disadvantaged pupils, including the most able disadvantaged pupils, achieve as well as their peers in reading, writing and mathematics. However, although pupils' individual needs are met well, leaders have not ensured that all statutorily required information, including plans for additional funding and the annually required special educational needs report, are published on the school website.
- You have revised the school's curriculum appropriately, emphasising the need for subjects to be engaging to pupils. As a result, pupils talk animatedly about opportunities in subjects like science, art and geography. Pupils display natural, uninhibited inquisitiveness, relishing opportunities to acquire new knowledge. This was strongly the case when, during the inspection, pupils explained how much they had enjoyed finding out about longitude and latitude in geography.
- Staff know each pupil well. Parents who expressed a view during the inspection noted the school's friendly, family atmosphere. Parents report that staff respond well to queries and solve issues promptly and effectively. One parent encapsulated the views of many, saying 'This is a school that gets the best out of our children'.

- Pupils behave well. Leaders have recently reviewed and adapted the school's behaviour policy, including its reward systems. The school's 'reach for the stars' system motivates pupils to try hard. Pupils say that friendships across the full primary age range are strong. They report that there is no bullying and hardly ever any disagreements. Secure friendships and good manners are the norm and pupils describe the school as a 'close knit community'.
- Pupils thoroughly enjoy coming to school. There is a confident, upbeat feel to the start of the day, as you make certain that you greet each pupil individually on arrival. In addition, a member of staff assists parents by collecting pupils from the drop-off point and walking them safely into school. This face-to-face contact also smooths out any early morning jitters so that pupils start the day in a positive frame of mind. Consequently, all pupils start the school day with a broad smile and a spring in their step.
- The quality of governance is excellent. Governors know the school's strengths and weaknesses well. Following federation, governors responded promptly, wasting no time in agreeing revised terms of reference and ensuring that all were clear on their newly modified roles and responsibilities. Governors are resolute, affirming that by working in partnership, standards will continue to rise. As one governor stated, one of our key aims is 'to keep momentum going and not stand still'. Governors' actions epitomise this commitment; their monitoring activity of the school's work is exemplary. For example, governors' analysis and critique of the school's improvement plan covers remarkable detail. Such input into setting the strategic direction of travel makes a prominent contribution to school improvement. Governors are knowledgeable, highly skilled and committed to providing the best for Beedon pupils.

Next steps for the school

Leaders and those responsible for governance should ensure that:

- they make greater use of assessment information in order to evaluate more fully their impact on raising standards
- the most able pupils have increasing opportunities to write at greater depth in order to achieve even higher standards
- the school's website meets statutory requirements.

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

Yours sincerely

Elizabeth Farr
Her Majesty's Inspector

Information about the inspection

During this visit, I looked closely at specific aspects of the school's provision including: safeguarding arrangements; the effectiveness of leadership; the achievement of pupils in the early years foundation stage; pupils' progress in reading and writing; and how effectively the school meets the needs of specific groups, including disadvantaged pupils and the most able. I met with you, the English leader, a representative of the local authority, a representative of the diocese and three governors, including the chair of the governing body. I also met with six pupils in key stage 2. I heard two Year 2 pupils read. I observed learning in all classes, all jointly with the director of primaries. I scrutinised pupils' work together with the English leader. I took account of 12 responses from parents to Ofsted's online questionnaire, Parent View, including eight written comments. I also took account of the views of three members of the school team who responded to the online survey for staff. I analysed a range of school documentation, including information about pupils' achievement, the school improvement plan and safeguarding checks, policies and procedures. We discussed your own evaluation of the school's effectiveness.