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12 December 2016

Mrs Susan Green  
Headteacher  
Bishop Cornish Church of England VA Primary School  
Lynher Drive  
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Cornwall  
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Dear Mrs Green

### **Short inspection of Bishop Cornish Church of England VA Primary School**

Following my visit to the school on 24 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 July 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 took up your current post as headteacher in January 2015. This is your fourth headship and you bring a wealth of experience to your role and to your drive to keep the school improving continuously. You have a very good understanding of what the school does well and the factors that contribute to its many successes. You are equally clear about the areas of the school's work that need further development; there is no sense at all that the school is content to rest on its laurels. For example, despite the school's extremely strong performance in the writing component of the 2016 national curriculum assessments at key stage 2, you are still prioritising aspects of writing for even further improvement. This also shows that the school's self-evaluation processes and strategic planning are robust and closely focused on achieving clear and measurable targets that are set in terms of improving pupils' progress. You are ably supported in this by other leaders in the school. Middle leadership is strong in areas such as the provision for disadvantaged pupils or those who have special educational needs and/or disabilities.

Members of the local governing body also bring much experience to bear on their duties as governors. Many are parents of either current or former pupils and have a long history of working successfully with school leaders to improve the quality of education that pupils receive. Annual audits ensure that the governing body has an appropriate range of skills, attributes and experience among its members, many of

whom provide the board with considerable expertise drawn from their professional lives. The governing body works with new members to ensure that they understand the roles and duties of a school governor clearly. As a consequence, the governing body is well placed to carry out its role of strategic oversight. It does this through a system that links governors to particular areas of school life, such as subject areas, and to specific year groups. This monitoring ensures that governors have a good understanding of the school's strengths and weaknesses and enables them to participate fully in setting the school's strategic direction.

Together, school staff and governors have ensured that Bishop Cornish School is a rich learning environment. Pupils are immersed in stimulating surroundings which help them to think, provide resources for their learning and develop their creativity. Examples of pupils' work cover the walls and demonstrate the progress they make in their academic, artistic and cultural development. Pupils respond to this environment very positively and demonstrate a keenness to learn. They behave very well, value their education and have a high rate of attendance. They also cherish the many opportunities to work with animals that the school provides.

Staff morale is very high. Responses to the online survey of their opinions show that all staff strongly agree that they are proud to work at the school and feel that leaders trust teachers to take risks and to innovate in ways that help pupils to learn. The majority of parents are happy with the quality of education provided to their children and would recommend the school. Words such as 'nurturing' and 'caring' are prominent in the responses to the online survey of parental opinion, Parent View. In particular, parents with children who have special educational needs and/or disabilities praise the help and support they have received from the school. Parents also recognise that communications between school and home have improved recently, but a significant minority would like to see them improve further.

### **Safeguarding is effective.**

Pupils, parents and staff are all confident that children are safe in the school. A culture of vigilance is supported by robust and timely processes that ensure that any concern about a child is acted on swiftly. Leaders and governors have a good understanding of the latest guidance issued by the Department for Education, 'Keeping Children Safe in Education' (September 2016), and its key principle of 'early help' is built into the school's approach to safeguarding.

Nonetheless, a few aspects of the school's work in this area need to be sharper. For example, the school has checked to ensure that no staff are subject to a prohibition order that would prevent them from teaching but these checks were not recorded on the single central record in line with requirements. Similarly, the admission register does not efficiently record all the information about pupils that the school possesses.

## Inspection findings

- Pupils continue to make good progress during their time at the school, both across the key stages and across the curriculum. Observations of pupils' learning, discussions with them and examination of their work all show that they are making secure progress in their knowledge, understanding and skills, especially in English and mathematics.
- In key stage 2, pupils continue to make particularly strong progress in their writing, as past cohorts have done. In the 2016 national curriculum assessment, pupils made substantial progress at rates significantly above the national average. Current pupils show similar rates of progress. School leaders continue to prioritise writing as an area for further development and there is not a scintilla of complacency in their approach, despite the high rate of progress already achieved. Rightly, they are focusing on improving pupils' spelling, punctuation and handwriting, which sometimes do not rise to the heights of their overall achievement in writing.
- Progress in reading and mathematics for current pupils in key stage 2 is also good. They are keen mathematicians and they read fluently; nonetheless, rates of progress are not as swift as they are for writing. This was also the case in the 2016 national curriculum assessments, where progress for reading and mathematics was broadly in line with the national average. Leaders know that they need to redouble their efforts to ensure that rates of progress are more consistent across all the core subjects of reading, writing and mathematics.
- In key stage 1, pupils do make consistently strong progress across all these key subject areas. This is evident in the work of current pupils in key stage 1 and also in the results of those who took the national curriculum assessments in 2016 and are now in Year 3. Not only did a higher proportion of pupils achieve the expected standard in each of reading, writing and mathematics than nationally, but a markedly higher proportion also attained a greater depth within the standard.
- Outcomes in the early years foundation stage have been consistently strong in recent years. A much higher proportion of children than the national average achieved a good level of development in 2016 and outcomes were particularly strong in literacy and mathematics. Children clearly get off to a good start in the early years and this provides a secure foundation for future progress.
- Extensive scrutiny of the work of the most able pupils, including the most able disadvantaged pupils, shows that they are making good progress. They demonstrate the ability to write with fluency and complexity in a tone or register appropriate to the genre of writing they are undertaking. The most able readers can read complex books and they talk about their love of reading and what an important part it plays in their lives, both in school and at home. The work of the most able in mathematics is broadly strong across the year groups. Nonetheless, the national curriculum assessments in 2016 at key stage 2 did show some signs that progress for the most able in mathematics was not as swift as it was in reading or writing.

- Provision for pupils who have special educational needs and/or disabilities is well led and as a consequence these pupils make good progress from their starting points. The special educational needs coordinator has a precise understanding of what additional help pupils need to allow them to make progress. Planning and the development of special educational needs support plans are clear and effective. The special educational needs coordinator works closely with the school's pupil premium 'champion' to ensure that any disadvantaged pupils who also have special educational needs and/or disabilities get the specific support they need.
- Disadvantaged pupils, including the most able, make good progress across the school, whatever their starting points. For example, in the 2016 national curriculum assessments at key stage 1, disadvantaged pupils attained the expected standard in higher proportions than other pupils nationally in each of reading, writing and mathematics. Moreover, a higher proportion than other pupils nationally also attained a greater depth within the standard in reading and writing. This strong picture of attainment and progress for disadvantaged pupils continues to be evident in the work of disadvantaged pupils currently in the school.
- The provision for disadvantaged pupils is well led by the school's pupil premium 'champion'. Robust and thorough intervention tracking allows for accurate evaluations of the impact of the use of the pupil premium and for appropriate adjustments to be made. School leaders and governors made the decision to spend the bulk of the school's pupil premium grant on additional staffing and, given the positive outcomes for disadvantaged pupils, this has proved a successful approach.
- There is a strong culture of reading in the school and pupils, whatever their ability, talk about how much they enjoy reading and how regularly they do it. The school works very effectively with readers who need support and they make rapid progress as a result. These readers demonstrate a secure ability to use the reading techniques that they have been taught, such as phonics, to help them deal with unfamiliar or difficult words.

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

Leaders and those responsible for governance should ensure that:

- pupils' progress in reading and mathematics in key stage 2 improves so that it matches the rapid progress they make in writing
- the quality of pupils' spelling, punctuation and handwriting rises to match the high levels of achievement and creativity they show in their writing overall
- they continue their work to improve communications with parents so that an even higher proportion are positive about their interactions with the school.

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

Yours sincerely

Stephen Lee  
**Her Majesty's Inspector**

### **Information about the inspection**

During the inspection, I held a number of meetings with you and with members of the governing body, including the chair. I also had discussions with teachers and with the middle leaders responsible for the provision for disadvantaged pupils and those who have special educational needs and/or disabilities. I spoke to a representative of the local authority on the telephone. Jointly with you, I undertook observations in lessons, scrutinised work in pupils' books and talked to them about their learning. I also listened to a number of pupils reading aloud. I examined documents provided by the school: these included the school's own self-evaluation and the school development plan. I had a discussion with two parents and took into account the 93 responses to the online survey of parental opinion, Parent View. In addition, I reviewed 19 responses to the staff survey and one response to the pupil survey.

In particular, the inspection focused on the following key lines of enquiry:

- How well do pupils make progress across the key stages and across the curriculum?
- How effectively do the most able pupils make progress?
- How well do disadvantaged pupils and those who have special educational needs and/or disabilities make progress?
- How effectively do leaders and governors monitor the impact of the use of the pupil premium on disadvantaged pupils?