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Piccadilly Gate
Store Street
Manchester
M1 2WD

T 0300 123 4234
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Mr David Fitzsimmons
Executive Headteacher
Bridgerule Church of England Primary School
Bridgerule
Holsworthy
Devon
EX22 7EN

Dear Mr Fitzsimmons

Short inspection of Bridgerule Church of England Primary School

Following my visit to the school on 31 January 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 January 2013.

This school continues to be good.

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

As the executive headteacher of the federation, you are working successfully with leaders and governors from across the partnership to secure the ongoing success of Bridgerule School. You have not wavered in your determination and have managed a difficult period of staff turnover well. You ensure that all leaders are clear about their roles and responsibilities across the schools. Skills and expertise from across the federation are being drawn on well and contribute strongly to the ongoing success of your school. Training for teachers and teaching assistants has helped to ensure that pupils' progress improved at an impressive rate last year.

Your school has a culture in which pupils can thrive. Overall, parents are happy with the school and the way it has improved since the last inspection. A few parents, however, express some uncertainty about the way the federation works to support their children's learning. In contrast, many other parents convey great confidence in your school and how well it supports their children's personal, social and academic development. Pupils enjoy being at school and are very well behaved. They work hard in lessons and listen respectfully to each other when expressing personal views and sharing ideas. Their high levels of engagement in lessons and the pride they take in their work reflect their enthusiasm for school. You ensure that the curriculum is well planned and provides pupils with a broad variety of experiences across a range of subjects. Pupils particularly enjoy the visits that are organised to

places such as the Eden Project and Morwellham Quay.

At the time of the last inspection, you were asked to raise the standard of pupils' mathematics. During my visit it was very clear that the training for teachers and teaching assistants, and a new approach to teaching mathematics, are ensuring that more pupils are reaching a higher standard than in previous years. Support for teachers to plan more effectively is moving pupils' learning on quickly, but also ensuring that they are very secure in their level of knowledge and understanding at any given time.

Safeguarding is effective.

Leaders and governors have successfully established a strong culture of safeguarding in the school and ensure that relevant checks are made when recruiting and appointing staff. Safeguarding arrangements are fit for purpose and the records kept are detailed and of high quality. Staff and governors are regularly trained in ways to keep pupils safe. Staff know pupils and their families well and leaders are quick to respond to, and follow up on, any issues that might arise. This vigilance ensures that pupils and parents get access to the services they need to keep them safe. As a result of the care they receive, pupils report that they feel safe in school and are confident about seeking the support of an adult if they have a worry or concern.

You and your staff promote respectful and positive relationships between pupils and between pupils and adults. This helps to ensure that pupils take care of each other and they move around the school safely. For example, older pupils were seen to take care not to bump into or rush younger pupils when walking up the steps to the playground. Pupils are able to explain what they need to do to stay safe when using the internet and are very clear about how to manage personal risk, including when using mobile phones. Leaders have been quick to tackle issues relating to attendance through close liaison with families, and as a result the attendance of pupils is good.

Inspection findings

In agreement with you, I checked how well teaching supported pupils of different ages and abilities, and how well the pupil premium is used to help disadvantaged pupils to achieve well. I also considered the quality of the teaching of mathematics and phonics to see if it is helping to raise standards. I also checked to see if actions taken to improve pupils' attendance have been successful.

- New procedures for assessing and checking on the progress that pupils are making in reading, writing and mathematics are effective. Work with other schools in the federation to check the accuracy of the assessments is helping teachers to plan activities that take pupils' learning forwards at a good rate. From entry into early years through to Year 6, pupils are now making good and, for some pupils, rapid progress in reading, writing and mathematics. Staff are clear about the benefits of working with other schools and how it is contributing to the

good progress pupils are making, but this is not being clearly communicated to all parents.

- Teachers are now better informed about how well pupils are doing and what they need to learn next in reading, writing and mathematics. They plan activities that help pupils, including those who have special educational needs and/or disabilities, the most able pupils, disadvantaged pupils and the most able disadvantaged pupils to make good progress. More pupils are now achieving the expected and higher levels of attainment than in previous years. You recognise that this work needs to be further embedded so that pupils, especially the most able, are consistently challenged to reach the standards that they are capable of.
- Additional funding received by the school to support disadvantaged pupils is used in a targeted way. 'Individual pupil trackers' allow the school to direct the additional funding they receive to support disadvantaged pupils effectively so that they make good progress from their starting points.
- You have secured improvement in pupils' progress and attainment in mathematics by implementing a different approach to teaching and ensuring that teachers and teaching assistants receive appropriate professional development training. From early years to Year 6, teachers focus on the development of pupils' mathematical language. Activities planned require pupils to justify, explain and clarify their mathematical reasoning. Your chosen approach is helping pupils to make good decisions about what mathematical strategies to use, particularly when solving problems. As a result, pupils' confidence and understanding in mathematics are growing. More are working at the higher levels than in previous years.
- Following training for teachers and teaching assistants, you have introduced a more consistent approach to the teaching of phonics. Children in the early years and pupils in key stage 1 benefit from the frequent phonics teaching they receive. Pupils who have difficulties receive individual or small-group support to help them catch up quickly. Pupils' increased phonic knowledge is helping them to improve their reading and writing, with more currently working at the expected levels than in previous years.
- Pupils' attendance has been good in previous years, with below-average rates of persistent absenteeism. You have been quick to tackle the poor attendance of some pupils that caused the drop in attendance last year. Working closely with the education welfare officer to engage and support families, you have succeeded in securing a marked improvement in the attendance of a number of pupils this year. As a result, attendance for the current academic year is good.

Next steps for the school

Leaders and those responsible for governance should ensure that:

- pupils' progress in reading, writing and mathematics continues to improve so that more pupils, especially the most able, achieve the highest standards
- communication with parents improves so that they are better informed about the

work of the school and federation, and the progress that their children make.

I am copying this letter to the chair of the governing body, the director of education for the diocese of Exeter, 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

I observed learning in each classroom, accompanied by you and your head of primary. We looked at pupils' work in books to review the progress being made, I also considered the school's own assessment information. I spoke with pupils at playtime and during lessons about their experience of school. I spoke to an officer of the local authority and three governors. I also spoke with parents at the start of the day, by telephone, and took account of the 11 responses to Parent View. The 10 questionnaires completed by staff were also considered. I talked to senior leaders and administrators about safeguarding practices, including those related to pupil attendance. Meetings were held with you, your head of primary and other senior leaders to discuss improvements in teaching. We discussed your self-evaluation and the part of the federation-wide plan that relates to the school.