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Mr Andrew Harrison
Headteacher
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Dear Mr Harrison

Short inspection of Bysing Wood Primary School

Following my visit to the school on 28 February 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 February 2012.

This school continues to be good.

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

Since your appointment in 2013, you have provided strong and effective leadership. You have skilfully built a team of highly committed and enthusiastic staff, who share your vision of excellence for the school. Your work is valued by all. You and other leaders have created a nurturing, happy atmosphere across the school. Staff especially appreciate the support you give them and the time you invest in building their leadership skills. This has enabled other leaders to become more effective in driving forward improvement since the last inspection. Leaders of particular subjects or phases are playing a bigger part in monitoring teaching and providing guidance to help to improve it.

The impact of your strong leadership is evident in the improvements to progress and outcomes for current pupils. Leaders and staff have responded to the last inspection report well by improving pupils' progress in reading in key stage 1. You have ensured that the teaching of early reading skills is consistently effective. Pupils who do not make rapid progress are identified quickly in order to receive excellent support from a well-trained team of teaching assistants. Standards have risen significantly in phonics since 2014 so that they are now above national averages at the end of Year 1. Standards are also rising in the early years.

You were rightly concerned about the 2016 dip in standards, particularly in

mathematics, in key stage 2. You have ensured that progress has increased rapidly this year. Your systematic and analytical approach identified pupils' poor reasoning skills as part of the reason for the dip in standards last year. The effectiveness of teaching in mathematics has improved and reasoning skills have been a focus for the whole school. One pupil said, 'I like maths now. We get to think about maths in steps we understand and to talk about how we tackle questions.' You agree, however, that staff do not generate work that challenges the most able pupils consistently well.

You are held in high esteem by the local authority which views the curriculum you have developed as a model one. You have requested additional 'progress and impact' meetings with local authority advisers, such is your commitment to school improvement.

Safeguarding is effective.

You ensure that safeguarding policies and procedures are understood by staff and governors, including those new to the school. As one staff member said, 'Staff care about the pupils' well-being and are always alert about safeguarding issues.' Staff know the school's families and the wider community well, so they are well aware of particular difficulties and risks which families may struggle with. The leadership team has made sure that all safeguarding arrangements are both fit for purpose and regularly updated in line with current statutory guidance. Staff record and follow up any incidents or concerns thoroughly. They work closely with outside agencies to protect children from harm and to support families in crisis.

You have worked tirelessly on reducing overall and persistent absence since your appointment as headteacher. You are aware that in recent years, some pupils have missed too much school. Rigorous systems are in place to check where pupils are, why they are absent and to hold parents to account. Parents value the role of the school's family support adviser, who works closely with families to improve attendance and well-being. I am convinced that the school has strong and effective strategies in place and current attendance is improving.

Pupils at the school feel safe. Staff's vigilance and care for the individual was summed up by one pupil, who said, 'Teachers listen to your needs. They sort out our problems quickly and fairly.'

Inspection findings

- The focus of this inspection was to identify what actions the school is taking in response to the apparently low achievement of Year 6 pupils in 2016 and how successful those actions have been. Inspection activities also focused on the actions being taken to ensure that all pupils make the progress they are capable of in mathematics. I looked at whether the pupil premium funding was being used effectively to secure improved achievement for disadvantaged pupils. In the early years, the focus was on how leaders and managers were tackling apparent underachievement over time and what impact their actions were having.

- You have reinvigorated the governing body under your leadership. Governors have a very accurate view of the strengths and areas the school needs to develop. They have developed systems, processes and skills to hold leaders to account. Governors engage in a range of useful monitoring and development activities, including, for example, how to interpret information about pupils' performance. They share, with passion, your aspirational vision for the school. Governors value your strong leadership and empowerment of staff.
- Your determination and ambition has had a positive impact on the quality of teaching and learning. The teaching of phonics and reading is good. You have ensured that they are taught systematically and regularly. As a result, there has been an improving trend over the last three years in the proportion of pupils who met the expected standard at the end of Year 1. Skilled and sensitive support means that pupils who are reading at levels below age-related expectations develop confidence and enjoy reading. Key stage 1 reading standards are substantially higher than at the time of the previous inspection.
- The new leadership structures you have introduced have led to senior and middle leaders making a strong contribution to supporting and holding teachers to account for the progress children make in their classes. Developments which improve the quality of teaching and pupils' progress, such as the new mathematics scheme, have been introduced successfully. Across the school there is now a consistent approach to teaching mathematics. There is greater emphasis on reasoning skills. Standards in mathematics are rising, but you acknowledge that there is more to do to improve outcomes for the most able mathematicians.
- The school's own progress tracking information and outcomes since the start of this academic year demonstrate that the majority of pupils are making strong progress in reading, writing and mathematics and are on track to meet end-of-year expectations. There is more to be done, however, in giving most-able pupils the opportunity to work at greater depth in mathematics.
- The curriculum, which has evolved under your leadership, has resulted in pupils finding lessons interesting, being enthusiastic about homework tasks and excited about their learning. There are many times when they can write from first hand experiences, such as theatre visits, trips to art galleries or the school's real-time bird watch. High-quality classroom displays celebrate pupils' writing linked to history, geography, art and science projects. Leaders thoughtfully consider the interests, needs and concerns of pupils when planning the curriculum. Homework tasks on display, such as Mayan temples, demonstrate your success in encouraging parents to play an active part in their children's education. The impact of this widening of pupils' life experiences is seen in the quality and quantity of writing in books over time. Pupils study the main religions found in Britain and how democracy works, preparing them well for life in modern Britain.
- Parents, staff and pupils say that behaviour is good. Systems to manage the very few, low-level incidents in classes are well established. The atmosphere in school is calm and purposeful. Pupils enthusiastically carry out important roles such as being house captains, sports crew and school councillors. You have introduced equipment for lunchtimes which the pupils love and it encourages all ages to play cooperatively.

- Pupil premium funding is used well, so that disadvantaged pupils typically achieve in line with those who are not disadvantaged. You have worked hard with other schools locally and with the local authority to validate your assessment judgements as accurate and secure. Additional adults support disadvantaged pupils in mathematics, writing, and reading. They provide excellent role models for how pupils should speak and listen, and their subject knowledge is good. This is helping less confident pupils to make better progress.
- The majority of children enter the early years with starting points below typical for their age. Maximum attention is paid to improving their speaking and listening as this has been identified as the weakest aspect of their development. High levels of adult intervention and targeted support are why children make significant progress in communication skills quickly. Although children make accelerated progress in all areas of learning, because of their low starting points, achievement on entry to Year 1 is still below national averages. Leaders have improved parental involvement through a school-wide initiative of open afternoons and an 'open door' policy. Parents contribute information to their children's learning journey record online. 'My child is flying now, having caught up after joining the school when term had already started' is typical of parental views of the quality of education in the early years.

Next steps for the school

Leaders and those responsible for governance should ensure that:

- teachers make better use of assessment information, especially in planning mathematics lessons, so that they challenge the most able pupils to make even greater progress
- in mathematics lessons, teachers check regularly how well pupils are doing so that no one falls behind.

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

Yours sincerely

Lynda Welham
Ofsted Inspector

Information about the inspection

During the inspection, you and I observed teaching in all classes and in intervention groups. I considered a range of evidence including the latest assessment information about pupils' progress, leaders' evaluation of the school's work and plans for improvement, and work in pupils' books. I held several meetings with you and other leaders and also met with members of the governing body and a

representative of the local authority. I talked to pupils about their learning and took account of 13 staff and 81 pupil views through questionnaires. I viewed the seven responses to Ofsted's online questionnaire, Parent View, and written comments. At the beginning of the day I had conversations with parents and carers.