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Mr Marcus Faulkner
Headteacher
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Dear Mr Faulkner

Short inspection of Bearbrook Combined 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 November 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 have created a school where pupils think learning is 'fun' and where they feel safe. Your staff are committed to helping all pupils achieve the very best that they can. The school's classrooms and corridors are enriched by pupils' high-quality, creative artwork. Pupils are working to a high standard in art because you provide specialist art teaching.

Pupils, staff and parents value your leadership. You are very ambitious for your school and have an accurate understanding of what the school does well and where aspects of its work could be improved. You have successfully managed any underperformance of staff effectively over time. Senior and middle leaders are effective. You, with the support of your governors, have reviewed their roles. Your skilful development of leaders means that they support teachers well in classrooms. As a result, pupils are making much better progress in phonics, reading, writing and mathematics. However, there is room to raise achievement further in these aspects.

Governors are highly effective and know their school well. They work closely with senior leaders and offer a good level of support and challenge, never holding back on asking probing questions. Leaders, including governors, now need to ensure that attendance continues to improve, particularly for disadvantaged pupils.

At the time of the last inspection, you were asked to give pupils work that was more challenging and to support them to work independently. Talking to pupils and

looking at their work showed that that they now enjoy more challenging work and are not afraid to try something new.

Leaders recognise that over the last two years, too few pupils made good progress in reading, writing and mathematics at the end of key stage 2. Leaders are also aware that too few pupils achieved the expected standard in the Year 1 phonics check. Leaders have accurately identified the reasons why this was the case and have taken swift and effective action. Current pupils are making strong progress in key stage 2. In light of recent outcomes for pupils, assessment systems have been thoroughly reviewed and senior leaders have been tenacious in ensuring that all teachers understand and use the information well. Consequently, accurate judgements are being made about pupils' progress and achievement.

Safeguarding is effective.

The leadership team has ensured that all safeguarding systems are fit for purpose and records are detailed and of a high quality. All staff are expected to read and understand the school's expectations for keeping pupils safe. Staff follow this guidance meticulously and, if they have any concerns for a pupil's safety, these are addressed swiftly. You and your team actively work with families and other agencies to ensure that any safeguarding issues are given the correct priority and attention. Leaders are not afraid to challenge decisions made by other professionals and to make strong representation on behalf of pupils.

Governors review safeguarding processes regularly and effectively. They take their duty very seriously and are passionate about ensuring everyone's safety. Pupils enjoy school, feel safe and know who to go to if they have any concerns. Pupils have a good deal of respect for you and know that you will listen to them.

Inspection findings

- During this inspection I looked at: the progress key stage 2 pupils are making in reading, writing and mathematics; the progress of early years and Year 1 pupils in phonics; and the impact of leaders' actions on improving attendance levels for disadvantaged pupils.
- Leaders have taken effective action to improve teaching, learning and assessment in key stage 2. As a result, current pupils, including those who have special educational needs and/or disabilities, are making good progress and achieving well. Assessment information is accurate and teachers refer to it and use the information effectively when planning their teaching.
- In mathematics, planned learning takes account of pupils' different starting points. As a result, pupils are challenged well to develop their knowledge and skills, particularly the most able, who are also making good progress.
- Pupils of all abilities enjoy the wide range of books in school. The most able readers talk avidly about the books they are reading; their non-fiction reading is often linked to what they are learning in class. For example, a Year 5 pupil read about the bubonic plague and linked this to her history topic. She explained the

symptoms in vivid detail!

- Children in the early years get a good start. In Reception, they make good progress in their reading by learning about letters and sounds. Teachers and support staff work well with pupils ensuring that what they learn builds on what they already know and can do. This is also true for the transition from the Reception Year to Year 1 as teachers make good use of assessment information to build on pupils' prior learning. The majority of pupils in Year 1 are on track to achieve the expected standard in the phonics check.
- Pupils' attendance, including attendance of disadvantaged pupils who have historically not come to school often enough, is improving. Leaders track lateness and absence very thoroughly and work hard with families and other agencies to reduce pupils' absence. However, there is more work to do to improve the attendance levels of disadvantaged pupils.

Next steps for the school

Leaders and those responsible for governance should ensure that:

- as many Year 1 pupils as possible meet the expected standard in phonics
- by the end of key stage 2, a greater proportion of pupils have made good progress in reading, writing and mathematics from their key stage 1 starting points
- more disadvantaged pupils attend school regularly.

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

Yours sincerely

Sarah Varnom
Ofsted Inspector

Information about the inspection

I met with you and senior leaders to review your evaluation of the school's effectiveness. I accompanied leaders into a number of classrooms across the school. I heard key stage 1 and 2 pupils read and spoke to others as I moved around the school. I had a meeting with older pupils and took into account 92 responses to the pupil survey. We evaluated a range of work in pupils' books alongside your assessment information. I met with your leaders of learning. I checked the effectiveness of your safeguarding arrangements including those related to recruitment. I met with the attendance officer to analyse attendance data and check behaviour records. I met with governors and a representative from the local authority. I looked at 19 responses to the staff survey. I spoke to parents in the playground at the start of the day and considered their 59 responses to the online questionnaire, Parent View.