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Mrs Rachael Schofield and Mrs Susan Brown
Co-headteachers
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Dear Mrs Schofield and Mrs Brown

Short inspection of Bassingbourn Primary School

Following my visit to the school on 21 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 July 2012.

This school continues to be good.

The leadership team has maintained the good quality of education in the school since the previous inspection. Your incisive leadership, coupled with high expectations for all pupils to achieve well, both academically and in their personal development, have ensured that the school continues to move forward.

A significant number of pupils join the school part-way through their primary education. Through the school's effective induction procedures, you successfully ensure that these pupils settle quickly into the school. You swiftly check pupils' starting points on entry to your school. You use the results to inform teaching and learning, and ensure that pupils achieve well.

The provision for pupils who have special educational needs and/or disabilities is effective. Regular reviews of progress ensure that teaching, including individual programmes of support, is well suited to meet pupils' needs. Consequently, pupils who have special educational needs and/or disabilities make at least expected and sometimes better progress. This inclusive approach to meet the needs of all pupils is appreciated by parents. One parent said, 'All staff genuinely show interest in your child and family, caring above and beyond their normal duties.'

In your school development plan, you have prioritised improving the school's commitment to equality and increasing pupils' understanding of what it is like to live in modern Britain. This is supporting you well to further develop your embedded ethos of being an inclusive and cohesive school community.

Governors share your ambition and vision for the school. They provide effective support and challenge. They ensure that their statutory responsibilities, especially in safeguarding and pupils' welfare, are fully met and effective. For example, they make sure that the school's website is compliant with statutory expectations and serves to provide useful information that is easily accessible to parents. Governors are involved in evaluating the work of the school, and contributing towards the school's improvement plans. They play an effective role in determining the strategic work of the school.

Since the previous inspection, you have focused relentlessly on improving the quality of teaching and learning through regular monitoring, training and focused intervention. Teachers appreciate the opportunities they receive to improve their practice; they take on board the advice they are given, and there is a real sense of teamwork among staff. You have developed a stimulating learning environment and the school's agreed 'conditions for learning' are embedded in every class. For example, your non-negotiables of having learning walls for maths, English and science, and 'toolkits' of equipment that pupils may need during lessons, are visible in all classes. As a result of this consistent and rigorous approach, the quality of teaching across the school is at least good.

An area for development from the previous inspection was broadening the range of opportunities for writing across all subjects. You have adequately addressed this and pupils' science and topic books now show a variety of writing tasks. Although this is a positive improvement, you know that there is still work to do to ensure that some pupils make more rapid progress in writing.

The quality of provision in the early years has improved since the previous inspection. Teachers ensure that children have opportunities to engage both in activities led by adults, and tasks that they can choose for themselves. Learning areas are welcoming and stimulating. The well-organised and varied resources ensure that children can investigate and explore their own ideas. Children have access to an exciting outdoor area and staff plan a good range of activities that capture children's interest. As a result, the proportion of children reaching a good level of development has risen in the last two years. Children make good progress and are being well prepared for Year 1.

Overall, attendance has improved over time and is now in line with the national average. Despite your best efforts to put in place thorough systems to track pupils' attendance and monitor punctuality, the attendance of disadvantaged pupils and of pupils who have special educational needs and/or disabilities, remains lower than average.

You are aware of this and inspection evidence shows that you work very closely with families to provide individualised, effective support for these pupils. The attendance of both disadvantaged pupils and pupils who have special educational needs and/or disabilities is improving.

Safeguarding is effective.

Leaders, including governors, ensure that all safeguarding arrangements are fit for purpose and safeguarding records are detailed and well organised. The nurturing approach, and vigilance from all staff, ensure that all pupils are well cared for. A strong ethos surrounding pupils' safety and well-being exists within the school community. All staff are fully committed to safeguarding pupils and recognise their responsibility in ensuring that pupils are safe and secure at school.

Effective checks are made on the suitability of staff to work with children. The induction of new staff is very thorough and includes up-to-date training on the 'Prevent' duty. The school's systems for recording incidents of concern are very well developed.

As a result of the strong safeguarding culture, pupils feel safe in the school and know that they can talk to staff about the things that worry them. They know that staff will listen to them and follow up their concerns.

The majority of parents who responded to the online questionnaire, Parent View, agree that their children are safe and happy. They commented that, 'The school has strong safeguarding protocols and open lines of communication between teachers and parents.' One parent said that they are pleased that their child is 'part of such a caring and friendly school environment'.

Inspection findings

- You and your governors know the school well. You actively seek the views of parents and pupils on all aspects of the school. This helps you to accurately identify what you do well, and what the school needs to do to continue on its journey of improvement.
- As part of the inspection, in order to ascertain whether the school remains good, I considered a number of key lines of enquiry. One area of focus was considering the progress that key stage 2 pupils make in writing and mathematics. Previously in 2016, key stage 2 pupils' progress in writing was below the national average. The writing in pupils' books, along with the school's current assessment information, shows that pupils in all year groups are now making at least good progress in writing. This is confirmed by the quality of pupils' writing across other curriculum subjects.

- You rightly focus on improving teaching in mathematics by increasing the opportunities for pupils to apply their problem-solving and reasoning skills in lessons. Work in pupils' mathematics books demonstrates that most pupils are currently making good progress in mathematics. As a result of your focus to increase pupils' progress, a larger proportion of pupils are now making accelerated progress in writing and mathematics, and are on track to meet at least the expected standard typical for pupils of the same age.
- Another key line of enquiry was considering how leaders are ensuring that the difference in the progress boys make in writing, compared with that of the girls, is diminishing. Following your own analysis of the school's information, you are reviewing the curriculum to secure exciting opportunities for boys to write. For example, the boys that I spoke to were enthusiastic about the recently introduced 'wow days' and gave an example of how they created suspense in their horror-story writing by recreating a scene beforehand, to help develop their ideas. The boys were animated about their writing and were able to show how they are improving. Scrutiny of boys' writing demonstrates that key stage 2 boys are now making better progress in their writing and are applying these skills in other curriculum subjects.
- An additional focus for this inspection was to check whether the most able pupils are attaining the higher standards of which they are capable in writing. Published outcomes in 2016 show that most-able pupils were not making good enough progress to reach the higher standard. You are aware of this issue and it is a priority in your current school development plan. Already you are ensuring that the most able pupils have more varied opportunities to write for different purposes. This is increasing their enthusiasm and motivation to write. The most able pupils I spoke to report that they are now having the chance to write both fiction and non-fiction pieces and could talk about how they improve their writing. Consequently, the most able pupils are making better progress. You are aware that there is still some work to do to ensure that a larger proportion of most-able pupils achieve the best they can from their individual starting points.
- My final line of enquiry was to check that all pupils are receiving high-quality, age-appropriate provision in both the single-aged and mixed-aged classes. You give careful consideration to the organisation of the classes for the beginning of every academic year. This ensures that the specific needs of pupils are taken into account. Inspection evidence, alongside your own monitoring, demonstrates that teaching and learning in all classes are consistently effective. As a result, most pupils are happy, confident and making good progress from their varying starting points in reading, writing and mathematics. Pupils also use their basic skills competently in other areas of the curriculum. Consequently, pupils are being well prepared for the next stages in their education.

Next steps for the school

Leaders and those responsible for governance should ensure that:

- they review and plan curriculum provision to ensure that boys are provided with interesting and relevant experiences that fully engage them in their writing tasks, so that they always achieve the best they can
- the most able pupils have a range of creative opportunities to write for a variety of purposes so that they make the progress of which they are capable.

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

Yours sincerely

Fiona Webb
Her Majesty's Inspector

Information about the inspection

I gathered a range of evidence to judge the quality of teaching, learning and assessment. This included short observations of teaching and learning jointly with you, in almost all classes, and sampling of pupils' current work across all subjects, and a wide range of abilities.

I spoke informally to a number of pupils in classrooms, met more formally with groups of boys and the most able pupils, and I listened to some pupils read.

Meetings were held with you, and the leaders of English and mathematics. We discussed the key lines of enquiry for this inspection, the school's internal evaluation of its performance, plans for future improvement and information about current pupils' progress and attainment.

Policies and procedures for the safeguarding of pupils were examined, including mandatory checks made during the recruitment of new staff, and a case study about referrals made to external agencies. The school's safeguarding arrangements, records, files and documentation were examined. A discussion was held with you both as the school's designated safeguarding leads.

I met with the chair and vice-chair of the governing body and another governor. I also met with the local authority associate adviser.

The views of 78 parents who responded to Parent View, and those who spoke or wrote to me during the inspection, were taken into account, as well as the responses parents made using the free-text service.