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Mr Andrew Chapman
Headteacher
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75 Uhlandstrasse
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Dear Mr Chapman

Short inspection of Bishopspark School

Following my visit to the school on 7 March 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 your school was judged to be good in October 2013.

This school continues to be good.

You and your leadership team have maintained the good quality of education in the school since the last inspection. Despite a period of flux in the leadership of the school, your appointment in September 2016 has brought much-needed stability and renewed vigour in striving for the absolute best. You have wasted no time in building a leadership team around you who share your passion for what can be achieved. Together, you have steered the school back on course and are rightly pursuing the very highest of standards after a brief dip in the school's performance.

You have the respect of staff, pupils and parents alike because at the heart of your work is a clear vision for what you want Bishopspark School to provide for its pupils, families and community. You are challenging everyone to 'be your best' through a focus on high academic standards, the cultivation of 'incredible character traits' and the development of effective learning habits. Given the context of the community you serve, this curriculum model serves pupils well. Ultimately, whenever pupils leave Bishopspark School, they are better equipped – socially, emotionally and academically – to deal successfully with any future challenges they may face.

You recognise that striving for the best necessitates a culture of continuous improvement. This starts with an accurate appraisal of the school's strengths and weaknesses; something which you have done swiftly. The school development plan uses this assessment of the school's performance to pinpoint, with precision, exactly what needs to be done, and by when, for success to be achieved. This has enabled a well-designed programme of staff training and facilitated open and honest dialogue between leaders and staff about what is working well and what still needs

to be done.

At the time of the last inspection, the school was asked to improve the quality of teaching and ensure that leaders at all levels were pursuing improvements. These aspects continue to be addressed successfully, given the inevitable churn in staffing and leadership that a school such as yours experiences. Importantly, you have recognised the need for succession planning, especially at a leadership level, so that there is always someone else primed and ready to go when key players within the school move on to pastures new. The formation of 'shadow' leaders, such as in mathematics, is helping you to maintain the impact of the changes you want to implement; they are not dependent on the work of any one individual. As such, improvements are being sustained and teaching is becoming more consistent.

Where you have identified that aspects of the school's work do not show the same strengthening picture over time, such as the outcomes for the most able pupils, you have undertaken a root and branch review of practice. From this baseline, you have begun to address the barriers to swifter improvement. For example, staff training about the typical characteristics of most-able learners has logically led to greater discussion about the teaching strategies that can be employed to challenge this group fully during lessons. While more still needs to be done to ensure that the proportion of pupils exceeding what is expected for their age increases, it is beginning to move in the right direction.

Parents and pupils are overwhelmingly supportive of the school and the changes you have implemented. Parents, in particular, recognise you as someone who will always listen to their views and who is willing to act, when needed, to make a positive difference to their children's and their own lives.

Safeguarding is effective.

You and your leadership team have ensured that all safeguarding arrangements are fit for purpose. You ensure that policies and practice keep abreast of recent legislation and good practice. Staff attend update training regularly so that they are vigilant and mindful of the potential dangers to pupils. Your close links and proactive work with other professionals, such as British Forces social workers, ensure that referrals for more specialist support are managed well.

You invest significant time in supporting pupils' emotional development. Specific sessions for those pupils who may be vulnerable provide the time and space for a trusting relationship to develop between an adult and a child so that discussion is open and honest. Pupils quickly develop their own armoury of strategies for dealing with their feelings so that they can respond more appropriately to challenging situations in the future.

You have cultivated a strong sense of belonging in a multicultural community. Teaching pupils about the values of respect, tolerance and open acceptance is one of the cornerstones of your work. You and your team have created a culture where difference, in whatever form it may take, is accepted and celebrated. This prepares pupils well for the realities of life beyond the school gates.

Inspection findings

- You believe practice in FS1 (Nursery) and FS2 (Reception) to be a strength of the school. Outcomes by the age of five certainly show that children in the early years get off to a flying start. FS1 is particularly strong at building the necessary foundations for children's future learning. Children leave for FS2 ready to learn, increasingly independent and equipped with the budding reading, writing and mathematics skills to succeed.
- Progress, while still good, is not as rapid in FS2. Over time, the proportion of children exceeding what is expected for their age has declined. Importantly, you have already identified this as an issue and implemented a raft of new measures to reverse this trend. This has included a significant overhaul of how children are taught to read and a more structured approach to early writing and mathematics. Children's achievements to date show that most are well placed to reach or exceed a good level of development this year.
- Pupils' outcomes in the phonics screening check at the end of Year 1 have declined over the last three years. You were rightly concerned about this emerging trend. A new way of working and new leadership has reinvigorated practices across the school. Pupils are no longer taught to recognise every word they encounter by sight; this amounted to simply guessing at print. Pupils are now taught to read by recognising the constituent sounds in a word. This approach is allowing them to tackle any unknown word, rather than just those they have committed to memory.
- Our scrutiny of pupils' work revealed that teaching is typically well matched to pupils' abilities. Most pupils make good progress from their starting points. In mathematics, pupils receive regular opportunities to use what they have learned to solve problems and think more deeply about the concepts they are learning. In English, pupils' compositions have improved as a result of talking through their ideas before committing them to paper. As a result, pupils are quickly grasping new skills. Now that these approaches are embedding effectively into everyday practice, you acknowledge that the focus needs to shift so that pupils have greater opportunities to use their skills across other subjects of the curriculum.
- You realised early in your headship that you could not make all of the changes that were needed on your own. You now have a strong leadership team to support you and help you forge even further forward. All of these leaders talk passionately, and with significant understanding, about the strengths and issues facing their own areas of responsibility. Central to their work has been the quick checking of classroom practice and the open and honest feedback to staff.
- The majority of the school governance committee (SGC) are new to their roles, including the chair and the vice-chair. Nevertheless, those I met with during the inspection were keen, interested and passionate about supporting and challenging the school to perform at its best. A training plan is well underway, with the effective support of the school's inspector-adviser (IA), to ensure that new members of the SGC develop the insight and confidence needed to challenge you fully. Members are already beginning to ask pertinent questions

about your work because they are eager to appreciate the difference you are making for pupils.

Next steps for the school

Leaders and members of the SGC should ensure that:

- the most able pupils are challenged in their learning and a greater proportion of pupils exceed what is expected for their age
- pupils are given greater opportunities to use what they have been taught in English and mathematics to support their learning in other subjects.

I am copying this letter to the senior principal, MoD Schools and the chair of the SGC. This letter will be published on the Ofsted website.

Yours sincerely

Lee Owston

Her Majesty's Inspector

Information about the inspection

During this one-day inspection, I discussed the work of the school with you, three senior leaders and the chair, vice-chair and three other members of the SGC. I also spoke face to face with the IA who is supporting the school and met with a group of pupils while they were having their lunch. You accompanied me on my visits to eight classrooms, including the FS1 building, which is off-site, where we observed phonics and mathematics. This provided an opportunity for us to observe teaching and talk to pupils informally about their learning and experiences of school. Together with two senior leaders, we evaluated the current standard of work in pupils' mathematics and English books. I scrutinised a range of other documentation about the work of the school, including your self-evaluation, improvement planning and recent information about pupils' attainment and progress. I also examined documents relating to the safeguarding of pupils. I considered the 28 responses to Ofsted's online questionnaire (Parent View), as well as 38 responses received from staff and 174 responses received from pupils. I also spoke with 16 parents at the end of the school day.