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Ms Lynne Golding  
Headteacher  
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Bildeston  
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IP7 7ES

Dear Ms Golding

### **Short inspection of Bildeston Primary School**

Following my visit to the school on 6 June 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 2013.

### **This school continues to be good.**

The leadership team has maintained the good quality of education in the school since the previous inspection. In July 2014, the long-serving headteacher retired. Governors successfully formed a collaboration with a nearby school, Whatfield Church of England Primary School, and you became the headteacher of both schools in September 2014.

As headteacher, you have a clear vision for the school and communicate your desire for every pupil to succeed effectively and well. You and governors understand the important role that the school plays within the local community.

You and governors continually develop adults' skills and, since the previous inspection, you have created a full-time deputy head position. You provide staff with many additional training opportunities so they can gain recognised qualifications and keep up to date with current teaching methods and practices. As a result, you have a highly motivated team of staff. One member of staff stated, 'I am proud of being part of this school.' This sentiment was echoed by all staff who responded to the staff questionnaire. Staff make a significant contribution to the positive ethos that exists in the school. They ensure a purposeful environment in which pupils can learn and achieve well.

This is a happy school where pupils enjoy their learning and want to achieve well. They speak highly of the changes made over this year, especially the introduction of

new reading books and your chosen reading scheme for key stage 2. Older pupils speak proudly about how well they consider they have been prepared for moving on to secondary school. These pupils' workbooks reflect the good progress that they have made over their final year at your school, particularly in writing. All parents who responded to the online questionnaire, Parent View, would recommend the school to others.

Governors know the school's strengths and areas for further development very well. They visit often to check that pupils are safe, well cared for and making good progress in their lessons. They are thoughtful and considerate with regard to finances and provide many opportunities for those who are more vulnerable to succeed.

### **Safeguarding is effective.**

Leaders have been successful in creating a safe and caring environment in which pupils can learn. You place a high priority on keeping pupils safe and providing strong pastoral care. All parents who responded to Ofsted's online questionnaire, Parent View, agree that their children are safe at school.

The leadership team has ensured that all safeguarding arrangements are fit for purpose and appropriate records are meticulously kept. You have thorough systems for staff to communicate concerns to you in writing. Confidential information in pupils' files is kept in good chronological order. Actions are recorded diligently and you ensure that all situations are pursued in the best interests of pupils.

Policies for safeguarding and child protection have been updated and are in line with current guidance from the Department for Education. Staff and governors receive good-quality safeguarding training and leaders provide additional relevant information through staff meetings. Leaders review practices annually and ensure that clear action plans are followed so that all staff remain up to date.

Almost all pupils who responded to the online questionnaire agreed that they have someone to speak with if they have any concerns or are worried. During the inspection, pupils participated maturely in a national one-minute silence and understood the reasons for a time of personal thought.

Pupils also learn about keeping themselves safe when using a range of technologies. You place a great emphasis on providing pupils with the information they need to make suitable choices regarding personal safety. This is very evident in the two-year curriculum programme you use.

### **Inspection findings**

- In the previous inspection report, senior leaders were asked to increase the effectiveness of other leaders. You recognise that, since the previous inspection, there have been several changes of staff, particularly staff being promoted to leadership positions in other schools. Developing leadership in your small school

remains one of your own priorities. New leadership in early years is proving very effective due to the additional support that you provide. Your partnership with Whatfield Primary is effective; staff and subject leaders have the opportunity to work together and share skills and ideas.

- Staff who responded to their questionnaire all agree that you provide for their professional development well and they are proud to work at the school. Adults speak appreciatively of the many opportunities that you provide for them to develop their skills further and gain recognised qualifications.
- Adults enthusiastically take on new initiatives, such as your chosen mathematics scheme, and this is proving effective. Pupils' achievement in 2016 showed an increase in mathematics in key stage 1, where you trialled this new mathematics approach. This year, pupils across the school are now benefiting from your more structured and successful approach. They have many opportunities to apply their mathematical skills.
- A key line of enquiry in this inspection was to establish whether pupils make rapid and sustained progress in reading and writing. This was because results in 2016 at key stage 2 demonstrated that fewer pupils reached the higher standard in writing than the national average, and in reading the number was in line with the national average. Reading was reported as a strength in the previous inspection.
- You have taken decisive action since the results in 2016 to improve the quality of reading in the school. Since providing a new range of texts, you have re-energised pupils' love for reading. Pupils have access to texts that they find exciting and enjoy the competition element that you have introduced. Pupils know how many books they have read and have a very clear understanding of their achievements. Your changes have been highly successful. Your school assessment information shows that a significant proportion of the pupils in Year 6 have made rapid progress in reading as a result. Pupils who read to me did so fluently, enjoyed their reading and could explain their understanding extremely well.
- In writing, older pupils are making good progress. Their books demonstrate that they have many opportunities to apply their writing skills across a wide range of genres. There is much evidence to show that they are proficient at editing and redrafting their writing, so that their final piece is of a good quality. You are aware that this approach is not as strong across the school as a whole. As a result, some pupils, especially the most able, do not consistently produce the quality of work of which they are fully capable.
- Another area I considered was the teaching of phonics in early years and key stage 1. This is because, in both 2015 and 2016, results were below the national average in the phonics screening check. Given the small numbers in each of the younger cohorts, caution needs to be taken when considering the percentages, as each pupil in your school often represents approximately 10%. Therefore, attainment results can appear to fluctuate year on year.
- Young pupils are provided with a systematic approach to phonics in lessons that ensures that they are taught the curriculum expected nationally. In Reception,

children are making good progress in learning and practising their sounds.

- Even so, for a few pupils, the sounds are not as precise and pure as they need to be. Pupils through the school do not readily apply their understanding of phonics to help with spelling unfamiliar words when writing.
- As you have such small numbers of disadvantaged pupils and pupils who have special educational needs and/or disabilities in your school, I pursued the quality of their provision as a key line of enquiry. This was to examine whether individuals receive specific support so they can make good progress.
- As leaders and governors, you are careful and thoughtful in how you use the government's additional funds. Governors support you in providing a wide range of additional and valuable resources for pupils. For example, you offer access to counselling or play therapy and additional support for pupils to attend the school trips you organise, and you support families effectively when their children start school. Disadvantaged pupils make good progress in their learning in all key stages, but you have already identified that none reached the higher standards in 2016 by the end of Year 6.
- You provide much bespoke support for pupils who have additional needs and train staff well, so they can meet pupils' individual needs appropriately and effectively. Consequently, pupils who have special educational needs and/or disabilities currently make good progress from their starting points and achieve well.
- The final key line of enquiry was to establish how successfully leaders are improving pupils' attendance. This was because, in 2016, the persistent absence figure was high for a few groups of pupils that have very small numbers, and resulted in attendance being in the lowest 10% nationally for these groups.
- Led by you, all school staff encourage good attendance and challenge persistent absenteeism. Through a range of challenge and support, you work with parents to increase attendance for individual pupils who fall behind your high standards. Your work with the education welfare officer is proving highly effective in helping families. Consequently, attendance overall remains at least in line with, and is often above, national averages.
- The local authority offers suitable support and guidance when required. Through their visits, advisers challenge and support leaders of all levels so that leaders and governors understand the key strengths and weaknesses in the quality of education at the school.

### **Next steps for the school**

Leaders and those responsible for governance should ensure that:

- the most able pupils, including the most able disadvantaged pupils, make even better progress so that they more consistently reach the higher standard by the end of key stage 2 in reading and writing
- adults raise pupils' achievement in phonics by ensuring that pupils use and apply their knowledge of sounds when spelling unfamiliar words.

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

Yours sincerely

Kim Hall  
**Her Majesty's Inspector**

### **Information about the inspection**

- At the start of the inspection, 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' learning. I met with the early years leader and the deputy headteacher.
- You and I observed pupils learning in all classes. We looked at samples of pupils' work in each class to evaluate the progress that pupils are making over time.
- We observed the teaching of phonics in early years and key stage 1.
- I listened to younger and older pupils reading and spoke with them about their books. I spoke informally with pupils during lessons about their learning.
- The school's safeguarding arrangements: records, files and documentation were examined. Discussions were held with the safeguarding leader.
- I met with the chair of governors and three other governors.
- The views of 16 parents who responded to Parent View, 12 staff who completed Ofsted's staff questionnaire and 34 pupils who completed the online pupil questionnaire were taken into account.
- I held a telephone conversation with a representative of the local authority.