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Mrs Emma Burgess
Executive Headteacher
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Dear Mrs Burgess

Short inspection of Bramford Church of England Voluntary Controlled Primary School

Following my visit to the school on 19 October 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 October 2012.

This school continues to be good.

The leadership team has maintained the good quality of education in the school since the last inspection. Parents, pupils and governors spoken to during the inspection recognise the improvements that you, your new head of school and staff have made to the school. Governors commented that you have brought 'dynamism' to the school with your leadership. Parents were equally as effusive. One parent who I spoke to said: 'Teachers are amazing!' One parent commented, via the Ofsted online questionnaire, Parent View: 'They always go the extra mile.' There were a number of specific examples cited by appreciative parents where leaders have supported their children.

There have been changes both in leadership and in staffing since the previous inspection. You started as executive headteacher in September 2017, having been head of school for four years. You have been joined by your new head of school, who has made a good first impression on the community. Parents say that she is 'friendly' and 'approachable'. Staff also appreciate her 'new ideas'. Pupils talk animatedly about the improvements in the school. They are of the view that learning is fun and they have the opportunity to learn more via clubs and workshops. Staff, pupils and parents are confident that the school is well led and managed.

Pupils and staff are very welcoming to visitors. There is a strong sense of

community. Pupils are caring and look after each other in lessons and during play. For example, in a display of dream jars where aspirations are written, a Year 4 pupil's dream jar states: 'My dream is to look after cats or dogs which are not wanted.' Another display captures pupils nominating each other for their kind words and deeds. There is a harmonious atmosphere in lessons, where pupils work well together and talk enthusiastically about what they are learning. Pupils say that bullying very rarely occurs. However, when there is an issue or 'unkindness', staff deal effectively with it.

You and your team have taken effective action to tackle the areas for improvement from the previous inspection. Improvements to the quality of teaching have been successful. Teachers and other adults ensure that pupils know what to do to achieve well. Changes to the teaching of mathematics have led to improved outcomes across the school. Teachers make sure that pupils' basic number skills are very secure. They also ensure that pupils can explain how they have solved a problem. As a result, pupils have a better understanding of mathematics and make more progress during lessons. Teachers are placing greater demands on the most able pupils. As we discussed, it is now important to ensure that all teachers move pupils to the next level of challenge swiftly.

Governors are ambitious for the school and have a clear understanding of its strengths and areas for further improvement. They use their skills to challenge leaders to ensure the best outcomes for pupils. This is evident through the questions they ask in their meetings and demonstrated well in the way in which they utilise funding. For example, they have increased staffing ratios in key stage 1 classes. This decision is having a positive effect on improving provision and pupil outcomes.

Safeguarding is effective.

The safety and well-being of pupils are a high priority at Bramford. Leaders have ensured that all safeguarding arrangements are fit for purpose and records are detailed and of high quality. Leaders act swiftly when necessary and liaise well with other agencies. Parents are confident that their children are safe and well looked after. Pupils feel safe and recognise that staff take good care of them.

Inspection findings

- My first line of enquiry was to review how leaders are improving the quality of writing in key stage 2. For the past three years, progress in writing has not been as strong as that in reading or mathematics. Your evaluations identified issues with teachers' assessment of writing, pupils' lack of accuracy and precision in their writing and the lack of opportunity for pupils to write at length across the curriculum.
- You have overhauled the assessment system. As a result, teachers are assessing more accurately and are able to intervene more readily as they now have easy access to performance information.
- Drafting and redrafting are a consistent feature in writing books across classes.

Pupils are now writing more accurately. They are able to manipulate sentence structure to alter meaning and use punctuation for effect. This focus in key stage 2 has also raised expectations in key stage 1. For example, Year 2 pupils were looking at the use of adventurous adjectives and connectives. There was some impressive extension of vocabulary, with pupils being able to use words such as 'colossal' and technical vocabulary such as 'asteroids'.

- Extended writing, where it occurs, typically is of high quality. Through the use of the cold task (first attempt at writing with no intervention) and the hot task (second attempt with refinement), pupils are working at age-related expectations and in some cases beyond. Nonetheless, there are still too few opportunities for pupils to practise extended writing in their dedicated English time and in other subjects.
- Successful actions have been taken to promote the importance of writing. Pupils are aware that it is a school focus. They say that there are plenty of opportunities to celebrate their writing. They appreciate the opportunity to display their work and they enjoy 'ACE' awards where key pieces are shared in assembly.
- A second line of enquiry was about the effectiveness of leaders' actions to increase the levels of challenge for most-able pupils, in particular, in most-able boys' reading. In 2016, not enough most-able boys secured greater depth in their reading. This was not the case in 2017. Leaders have implemented a range of strategies to increase demand on these pupils through the curriculum and through the planning of lessons. For example, there is now an accelerated reading scheme in place.
- In all lessons, teachers have a three-step challenge where pupils are encouraged to choose tasks according to their levels of difficulty. The increase in challenge for each step is appropriate. Pupils take responsibility for their learning by deciding which challenge would suit them best. However, teachers do not move pupils on quickly enough to the next challenge when they have completed a task.
- My third line of enquiry looked at the outcomes for Year 1 pupils in the phonics screening check. In 2016, pupils did not achieve as well as other pupils nationally. This was not the case previously, where typically the school has performed in line with or above national expectations. You have re-vamped how phonics is taught and staff have benefited from up-to-date training. Pupils who did not pass the phonics screening check in 2016 resat and half were successful with their second attempt. Results in 2017 were an improvement on 2016.
- Parents whose children had undertaken the phonics screening check for a second time spoke of the school's support. They found the home guidance booklets very helpful so that they could help their children practise phonics at home.
- Another key line of enquiry for this inspection was about the outcomes for children at the end of the Reception Year. In 2016, children had not reached national expectations in the areas of listening and attention, using media and materials and exploring. There are now plenty of opportunities in the early years curriculum for the development of these areas. You are improving the outdoor space over a period of time due to budget constraints. You are confident that, when complete, this will enhance children's learning experiences further.

- My final line of enquiry was to look at how leaders are securing good attendance for pupils at the school. While most pupils attend the school regularly, in 2016, attendance figures for disadvantaged pupils were below the national average in primary schools. Being a small school, the continual absence of one child can alter significantly the overall attendance figures. You closely track individuals whose attendance is a concern and work effectively with their families to reduce absence. However, the attendance of disadvantaged pupils is still not at the national average.

Next steps for the school

Leaders and those responsible for governance should ensure that:

- teachers provide frequent opportunities for pupils to develop and practise writing at length and in subjects other than English
- teachers swiftly move pupils on to the next level of challenge so that pupils can achieve the higher standards
- the quality of teaching of phonics is consistently high so that pupils achieve well in their reading
- leaders continue their work to improve disadvantaged pupils' attendance.

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

Yours sincerely

Liz Smith
Ofsted Inspector

Information about the inspection

During this short inspection, I met with you, your new head of school and the middle leadership team, teachers, governors and pupils. I also spoke with a representative from the local authority. You, the head of school and I visited classes to observe learning and to look at work in pupils' books. I met with pupils throughout the day and spoke with five parents in the playground before school. I considered the 68 responses and the 33 'free-text' comments made by parents on the Ofsted online questionnaire, Parent View. I heard several pupils read and observed pupils in the playground and in lessons.

I conducted a detailed review of safeguarding, including checking on the school's policies, procedures and record-keeping. I talked with you, other staff and governors about how the school ensures that children are kept safe. I also considered a range of other documentation, including school-improvement planning and information about pupils' progress and attainment.