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Mrs Lesley Hodgson
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Dear Mrs Hodgson

Short inspection of Bow Community Primary School

Following my visit to the school on 1 November 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 2013.

This school continues to be good.

The leadership team has maintained the good quality of education in the school since the last inspection. Your school is a place where pupils are eager to participate in the interesting activities it provides. Parents, staff and pupils used the word 'together' to describe the caring, friendly atmosphere at the school. All reported that, regardless of differences in their age, all pupils work, play and learn together well in a supportive, welcoming environment.

You use your detailed understanding and knowledge of your pupils to improve the quality of education across the school. Your approach to developing a nurturing community in a secure environment is evident from first entering the school. This is important because of the high number of pupils who join your school other than at the normal times. Often, these pupils have had poor school experiences elsewhere. Pupils settle quickly and learn together in a positive way. They are at ease with their peers because adults teach them to respect each other. You are proud of your school and the learning that is taking place but are aware that there is room for further improvement.

You recognise that achieving the best requires a culture of continuous improvement. In striving to reach this aim, you draw well on support and guidance from Dartmoor Teaching School Alliance. Improvements start with an accurate assessment of the school's strengths and weaknesses. The school development plan

uses this assessment of the school's performance to outline what needs to be done, and by when. This results in a well-designed programme of staff training and facilitates open and honest dialogue between staff and governors about what is working and what still needs to be done.

The overwhelming majority of parents who responded to Ofsted's online questionnaire, Parent View, are highly complimentary about you, your staff and all you do to make their children feel happy and well cared for. All parents feel that their children are safe in school. Parents typically commented on the rich curriculum and projects studied that engage and motivate their children by bringing learning to life.

You have successfully resolved the areas identified for improvement at the time of the previous inspection. Younger pupils are developing their knowledge of phonics well. Their performance in the Year 1 phonics check has improved year on year and is now above the national average. Pupils use their good knowledge of letters and the sounds they make to increase the range and breadth of vocabulary they use when writing.

Safeguarding is effective.

The welcoming and caring atmosphere created, together with up-to-date training for staff, ensures that your school has a strong culture of safeguarding. You and your governors ensure that safeguarding arrangements are fit for purpose and online records are detailed and comprehensive. Members of staff are knowledgeable about the signs of abuse and fully understand more complex issues such as child sexual exploitation and radicalisation. Parents are positive about the school's work and the difference it has made to pupils' lives. The school works well with other agencies and providers at the varying times of pupils' transition in and out of school. This helps to ensure the smooth flow of information and so ensures that pupils' individual needs are met.

Pupils report that they feel safe in school due to the care and attention they receive from adults. Pupils know how to report concerns and understand the process for doing so. They are confident that staff will help them if they have any issues. Your commitment to pupils' welfare is evident in the way you follow up matters when brought to your attention. Safety also features strongly in the curriculum, helping pupils to keep themselves safe in a range of situations and settings. Pupils are made aware of online safety and taught how to manage risks when working outside in the local environment or on local farms.

Inspection findings

- During the inspection, we focused on how well pupils who have special educational needs and/or disabilities are supported so that they can make good academic progress. We also looked at how well the teaching of spelling, punctuation and grammar was helping boys improve their performance in writing. In addition, we explored how well the curriculum in mathematics is

helping pupils' understanding of mathematical concepts. Finally, we examined how well leaders are using the findings from monitoring, particularly of those pupils in receipt of pupil premium funding, to bring about further improvements.

- The teaching of writing is technically accurate and well structured. Teachers use their good subject knowledge to ensure that pupils understand grammar and punctuation conventions well. For example, in English, teachers know how pupils' story writing should progress as they become more skilled in this genre. Pupils' compositions have improved as a result of talking through their ideas before committing them to paper. Work in older pupils' books typically shows writing containing fronted adverbials, expanded noun phrases and a range of punctuation used for effect.
- Your chosen approach to focus on using literacy in other subjects is engaging boys more and sparking their enthusiasm for writing. When this is coupled with an emphasis on getting the technical aspects of composition correct, pupils make swifter progress in their writing. This was seen in pupils' work when challenged to write haiku poems based on key events learned during their history topic on Word War I.
- Occasionally, the work in the books of some older pupils shows a lack of application of phonics knowledge to spell complex words. Spelling errors persist even for able pupils who produce technically accurate and grammatically correct pieces of work. This is holding back their achievement but you are working hard to resolve the issue.
- Teaching is characterised by strong relationships where pupils are happy in their inviting classroom environments. Your approach to teaching is benefiting all pupils, especially disadvantaged pupils. The observations we made during my visit, and the pupils' books we reviewed, show that disadvantaged pupils are making strong gains in their knowledge, skills and understanding. Pupils' attitudes to learning are good. They are learning to be more resilient when faced with trickier tasks and to be more reflective about what they have learned.
- Staff are fully supportive of your leadership. They are happy to be members of the school team and this permeates through their work. You monitor teaching through a variety of means and use a wide range of information. However, records of monitoring activities provide some generalised statements on pupils' learning rather than specifying the precise gains in pupils' knowledge, skills or understanding. This restricts the ability of the governing body to establish whether planned actions to improve the quality of teaching and pupils' learning are successful. It also prevents them from making even more penetrating analyses of the school's strengths and weaknesses.
- Your analysis of the performance of all pupils last year, following a dip in performance in 2016, prompted a comprehensive review of the arrangements to support pupils who have special educational needs and/or disabilities. Teaching assistants are now better deployed to maximise their skills and therefore the impact they have on pupils' progress. Programmes to support pupils' individual needs are increasingly personalised and being adapted to support pupils' learning in their day-to-day lessons. As a result, the majority of pupils who have special

educational needs and/or disabilities are progressing well.

- Your analysis of pupils' individual needs is enabling the special educational needs coordinator (SENCo) to identify barriers to cognition and development. However, there is more work to do in order to separate pupils with a genuine need and other pupils who simply need to catch up with their learning. Case studies and discussions show that support is now provided as soon as a problem is identified, at any point in the school. Adults now discuss concerns with the SENCo alongside other agencies to undertake an 'early help' assessment. Improved links with the local feeder pre-school are ensuring a smoother transfer of information when children join school.
- During our learning walk together, you recognised that the curriculum in mathematics is not enabling enough pupils to reach the higher standards. Across the school, topics are not helping pupils to develop concepts sufficiently well.
- Occasionally pupils are moved on in their mathematical learning before they have grasped a concept fully. As a result, not enough pupils are progressing as well as they could. You have clear plans in place to address this issue.
- Despite these deficiencies in the quality of the curriculum, discussion with key stage 2 pupils indicates their good understanding of some mathematical concepts. Pupils I met with challenged each other well to explain why six divided by a half results in a larger answer despite it being a division calculation. Pupils demonstrated developing reasoning skills when articulating the different operations required to solve problems.

Next steps for the school

Leaders and those responsible for governance should ensure that:

- monitoring activities focus on precise gains in pupils' knowledge, skill or understanding
- the curriculum in mathematics enables pupils' reasoning and problem-solving skills to develop so that their understanding of mathematical concepts improves
- the timing and precision of the identification of need for pupils who have special educational needs and/or disabilities are improved
- support for pupils who have special educational needs and/or disabilities helps them make even better progress with their writing.

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

Yours sincerely

Richard Light
Her Majesty's Inspector

Information about the inspection

During the inspection, I held meetings with you, the senior teacher and leaders for English, mathematics and special educational needs. Four members of the governing body, including the chair, met me to discuss the inspection findings and areas for improvement. The views of 46 parents were gathered through their responses to Ofsted's online questionnaire, Parent View. Visits to classrooms were conducted jointly with you to evaluate the impact of teaching on pupils' learning. We reviewed the quality of pupils' work over time, and listened to pupils read and talked informally with them about their experiences of school. I evaluated a range of documents including those relating to safeguarding and governance. I met with a group of pupils from key stage 2.