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Mrs Victoria Dupras
Headteacher
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Dear Mrs Dupras

Short inspection of Castle Batch Community Primary School

Following my visit to the school on 8 November 2017 with Paula Marsh, Ofsted Inspector, 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 previous inspection. Since you became headteacher three years ago, you have shown ambition and determination to maintain the several strengths in the school identified at the previous inspection, while working hard to improve the school further. Along with your senior leadership team, you have successfully motivated the rest of the staff to develop their skills and desire to achieve excellence. A more knowledgeable and actively involved governing body has supported you in this process and made sure that staff are accountable for pupils' progress. There is high-quality support for disadvantaged and vulnerable pupils, including those in the Resource Base, and you have used the available funding wisely.

Parents appreciate the quality of support which the school provides for their children. Parents told an inspector this during a 'tea and toast' session hosted by the school. Other parents praised the quality of support for vulnerable pupils. Pupils feel well looked after and enjoy coming to school. Parents responding to the online questionnaire, Parent View, are positive about all aspects of the school.

When the school was previously inspected, the inspectors asked teachers to provide more challenge and feedback to pupils to help them increase the rate of progress. Inspectors also asked the school's leaders to check the quality of teaching more regularly and provide more opportunities for staff to develop their skills further. You have successfully tackled these issues, although you recognise that providing a consistent level of challenge to all

pupils is an area for the school to work on further. At the same time, you and your staff have effectively absorbed changes in the curriculum and methods of assessing pupils' progress. Staff as a whole are very enthusiastic about the changes made and their positive impact.

Safeguarding is effective.

You have made sure that all safeguarding arrangements are fit for purpose. The relevant records are detailed and of high quality. When inspectors talked to staff and governors, they were able to confirm that they have had regular training in safeguarding awareness and applying relevant procedures. As a result, they are confident about how to look out for and respond appropriately to any possible concerns. You also support parents in making them more aware of the importance of safeguarding, for example, when their children are using the internet. Castle Batch is an inclusive school, characterised by very good relationships and a caring ethos. This is evident, for example, in the Resource Base for vulnerable pupils. Parents and pupils are very conscious of the school's strong safeguarding culture and, consequently, would warmly recommend the school to others.

Inspection findings

- My first line of enquiry was about the progress of children in the Reception classes and in key stage 1. Although pupils lower down the school made good progress at the time of the previous inspection, there have been some variations in their achievement since then. Partly, this has been the result of changes in the make-up of the pupil population and variations in the composition of particular classes. For example, the numbers of lower-attaining, disadvantaged and other potentially vulnerable pupils has often varied considerably in different year groups and classes from year to year.
- You have addressed most of these variations with increasing success. In recent years, the progress of children in Reception has improved, and more children are now achieving at or above the expected level of development by the time they join Year 1. The previous gap between the achievement of boys and girls is narrowing.
- In key stage 1, the relatively few disadvantaged pupils, including the most able disadvantaged, continue to make good progress in relation to other pupils. Writing continues to be a strength. Attainment and progress in reading and mathematics, which have been concerns in the past, are improving. You have resolved some of the issues in the teaching of phonics, by focusing on developing staff skills and acquiring good resources. Pupils' achievement in the Year 1 phonics screening check and in Year 2 has improved considerably in the past two years. Reading skills have improved.
- My second line of enquiry was about the progress of pupils in key stage 2 in reading and mathematics. In recent years, there have been variability and some underachievement in these subjects. This was evident in recent national assessments.
- A particular success has been your focus on improving achievement in mathematics. You have invested a lot of effort in the last three years into gradually developing staff expertise in teaching mathematics and improving resources. This is now paying off; pupils of all abilities are now making much more progress in mathematics. This is very evident in their work in books. Progress in reading has also improved. Your staff have adapted their approaches in practices such as guided reading, which have increased

pupils' enjoyment of books and their facility in reading.

- Pupils in key stage 2 are now developing their levels of knowledge and skills more securely, which is why you are confident in setting ambitious targets for achievement next year. However, you also recognise that staff, who are now more confident and skilled, should be more consistent in having yet higher expectations of what pupils of all abilities can achieve. This would help to remove some of the remaining inconsistencies still seen in some of the pupils' work in books.
- My third line of enquiry was about the attendance of disadvantaged pupils. This has been too low, and certainly their attendance in the recent past has been much lower than that of other pupils.
- You and your staff have considerably improved the attendance of disadvantaged pupils. You have achieved this by creating stronger links with parents, for example through the work of your pupil and family support workers, and by initiatives such as the breakfast club. In the current school year, disadvantaged pupils are attending at a higher rate than other pupils nationally.
- My fourth line of enquiry was about the effectiveness of teaching, since the previous inspection, in meeting pupils' needs. Teaching has improved, mainly because you monitor its effectiveness more regularly and hold staff accountable for pupils' progress.
- There have been more professional development opportunities for teachers and teaching assistants. This has enabled you to provide, for example, a more tailored programme of support for individual pupils who have particular learning needs. There are also now more regular and effective arrangements for assessing pupils' progress. These measures have had a significant impact on raising achievement. As you recognise, there are still some inconsistencies in expectations of what pupils of all levels of ability should be capable of achieving, which is why this is an important part of the school's improvement plan.
- My fifth line of enquiry was about the success of leadership and management at all levels in further driving forwards school improvement. At the previous inspection, there was a query about the effectiveness of procedures by which school leaders checked the quality of teaching and learning. You have considerably improved the arrangements. You and your senior leaders regularly check the quality of teaching and consider individual pupils' needs at pupil progress meetings.
- You now hold subject leaders more accountable for pupils' progress. They check the quality of provision and pupils' outcomes in their subject areas and produce their own action plans. You evaluate the school's strengths and areas for development accurately, and school improvement plans focus on the right priorities to continue moving the school forwards. Your record of success to date, particularly in improving pupils' achievement, confirms that the school has the capacity to build further on existing strengths.

Next steps for the school

Leaders and those responsible for governance should ensure that:

- teachers' expectations of children in Reception and pupils in the rest of the school are

consistently high, so that all pupils, of all abilities, do work which ensures that they have equal opportunities to achieve to their full potential.

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

Yours sincerely

John Laver
Ofsted Inspector

Information about the inspection

During the inspection, inspectors met with you, your deputy, other staff and with governors. I met a representative of the local authority and had a telephone conversation with another adviser. We spent some time walking through most of the classrooms with you and your deputy to observe learning and behaviour. We heard some younger pupils read.

We looked at a range of documentary evidence. This included the school's evaluation of its own performance and records of the attainment and progress of pupils currently in the school. We looked at the school improvement plan. I scrutinised information on attendance and external reports on the school's provision and outcomes. I looked at various documents relating to safeguarding.

We talked to some parents and gathered their views about the school. We also took account of 67 responses to the online questionnaire, Parent View. We received several free-text responses from parents. Inspectors looked at the results of a staff questionnaire.