

Ofsted
Piccadilly Gate
Store Street
Manchester
M1 2WD

T 0300 123 4234
www.gov.uk/ofsted



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Miss Melissa Cliffe
Headteacher
Basildon C.E. Primary School
School Lane
Upper Basildon
Reading
Berkshire
RG8 8PD

Dear Miss Cliffe

Short inspection of Basildon C.E. Primary School

Following my visit to the school on 16 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 December 2012.

This school continues to be good.

The leadership team has maintained the good quality of education in the school since the last inspection. Since joining the school, you have set out a clear vision and secured significant improvements to the quality of teaching, learning and assessment, leading to improved outcomes for pupils. You have galvanised a strong and capable leadership team which has improved standards in all areas of the curriculum. This success has been demonstrable and recognised throughout the whole school community. Parents are effusive in their praise. As one parent noted, 'I love this school and am so excited because it is going in such a brilliant direction.'

Leaders monitor the school in a variety of ways to evaluate accurately the strengths and weaknesses of the school. Termly governors' days offer the entire governing body the opportunity to work with leaders and observe first-hand the quality of pupils' work in class. The development plan is focused, detailed and offers clear milestones that governors use to check that actions are completed on time. Leaders and governors, wisely, use the support of the local authority well to gain external validation and to improve the remaining weaknesses in the school. Governors recognise the school's website does not currently meet government publishing standards.

Pupils are well behaved, highly motivated and kind. In class, they work with purpose and joy, sharing ideas, reading stories and contributing to whole-class discussions. The curriculum is exciting and broad. Pupils enjoy and achieve well in

their regular humanities, sports and art lessons. Pupils celebrate diversity and are respectful of those with different beliefs, nationalities and abilities. Pupils are united in their belief that 'We treat each other equally.' On the playground pupils play well and show kindness. Disagreements are rare, and when they do happen, pupils state that they are quickly able to forgive each other and to find common ground. In September, leaders wrote to all parents to encourage them to improve their children's attendance. This message was heard loud and clear. Pupils' attendance, including that of those who are disadvantaged, is well above the national average for primary schools.

At the time of the last inspection, leaders were asked to improve the effectiveness of middle leaders in the school. You have swiftly identified teachers with significant strengths in their subject areas and promoted them to middle leadership roles. These leaders use their well-developed skills to monitor, evaluate and form effective plans to improve the school. They support other teachers effectively to improve their practice, for example during the weekly 'mini-moderation' sessions teachers and support staff look at others' planning and work in books to identify strengths and areas for improvement. All staff have the opportunity to lead in some way and develop their leadership skills. This work is typified by your mentoring of the new mathematics leader, who is currently shadowing your example before she takes up her post. As a result, the capacity of the leadership team to secure further improvement has improved greatly.

Safeguarding is effective.

Child protection documentation is well maintained and securely stored. Checks on staff meet statutory requirements and are completed before staff commence their employment at the school. Governors with specialist training in safeguarding conduct regular monitoring visits to satisfy themselves that checks are in place.

Staff members are vigilant and highly skilled. They receive regular training and updates to help them keep abreast of emerging dangers faced by children both locally and nationally. They pass on concerns quickly to leaders who themselves work with external agencies to take appropriate action to keep pupils safe from harm.

Pupils know how to keep themselves and others safe. Pupils in Years 5 and 6 receive useful training from a paramedic, learning how to conduct basic first aid and to treat a person who falls unconscious. Pupils and parents worked with local police to improve their understanding of online safety. Their mantra of 'you wouldn't share your toothbrush, so don't share your personal information' appears to be particularly effective.

Inspection findings

- At the start of the inspection we agreed to look at: the effectiveness of safeguarding; the progress that pupils make in writing; the progress of key stage 1 pupils, including those who are disadvantaged, in mathematics; the level of

challenge that pupils receive and the how effectively the new senior and middle leadership team is driving improvement.

- In the summer of 2017, leaders noted a dip in pupils' writing attainment in key stage 2. Leaders took immediate and robust action to reverse this decline, implementing the 'daily write', and provided further opportunities for pupils to rehearse their writing orally before committing themselves to paper. For example, in Year 6 where pupils spoke eloquently about the characteristics of wild animals, linking their points with words such as however, furthermore and nevertheless. The quality of pupils' writing in the wider curriculum is excellent and demonstrates teachers' high expectations of what pupils can achieve. As a result, pupils throughout the school make strong progress in writing.
- Teachers have refined their planning to ensure that pupils regularly calculate and solve complex problems in mathematics. Increasingly, pupils are able to reason and explain to others exactly how they answered a question. Disadvantaged pupils receive additional tuition from teachers and support staff before lessons so that, when they enter the classroom, they hit the ground running. Pupils throughout the school, including those who are disadvantaged, make strong progress in mathematics. Leaders, rightly, recognise that pupils do not always use consistent methods to set out and present their work. This leads to some pupils having to learn different methods every year as they progress through the school.
- Teachers' aspirations for pupils are high. All pupils, regardless of their previous ability, are given challenging work that tests their thinking. For example, pupils in Years 5 and 6 learned how to use high-level punctuation such as semi-colons and ellipses to link their sentences. Pupils in Year 1 classified omnivores, carnivores and herbivores, using the correct scientific vocabulary and writing interesting observations about the animals' teeth. An increasing proportion of pupils are making accelerated rates of progress and attain at a high standard.
- Leaders at all levels are ambitious for pupils and focused on developing the school further. They systematically monitor the standards in the school and offer teachers and support staff useful and incisive feedback which helps them to improve their practice. The performance of staff is managed well. For example, teachers pay is closely linked to the progress of their pupils. The process is scrutinised and monitored by governors, who challenge leaders to do even better. As a result, the quality of teaching continues to improve.

Next steps for the school

Leaders and those responsible for governance should ensure that:

- pupils are taught consistent methods for calculating, problem-solving and presenting work in mathematics
- the school meets requirements on the publication of specified information on its website.

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

Yours sincerely

Daniel Lambert
Her Majesty's Inspector

Information about the inspection

I met with you, two governors, including the chair of the governing body, and representatives of the local authority. I observed learning in six classes, all jointly with you. We looked at pupils' work including the early years learning journeys and pupils' books. I analysed a range of the school's documentation, including information about pupils' achievement, the school improvement plan and safeguarding checks, policies and procedures. We discussed your evaluation of the school's effectiveness. I considered the 64 responses to Ofsted's online survey, Parent View, including 62 free-text comments and spoke to parents at the beginning of the day. I met with six pupils from Years 1 to 6 and gathered the views of other pupils throughout the day.