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Mr Andrew Lynham
Headteacher
Bailey's Court Primary School
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Dear Mr Lynham

Short inspection of Bailey's Court Primary School

Following my visit to the school on 6 December 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 March 2013.

This school continues to be good.

The leadership team has maintained the good quality of education in the school since the previous inspection. You have a precise and accurate understanding of current school performance and are fully aware of the many areas of strength and those aspects that require further work. As a result, you, your senior team and other leaders are working on the right aspects for improvement. The school's action plan is precise and leaders, including the governing body, monitor each action to ensure that it is bringing about the necessary changes.

You have adeptly maintained the ethos of the school, as a caring and inclusive community. Parents especially appreciate the extra support and care given to those pupils who may struggle, with one parent reporting how well staff 'make so much extra effort to help my child grow'. One parent spoke for many when saying: 'I can't recommend this school highly enough! My three children have been through the school. The teaching is and always has been excellent. My children have all thrived there.'

You have benefited from your 'soft' federation with five other neighbouring schools. Useful links have been forged between these schools to support staff training and moderation of pupils' work. However, some of your assessments of pupils' writing skills at the end of key stage 2 in 2017 were not generous enough. Leaders have sought expertise elsewhere, including from outside your locality, to enable them to introduce tried and tested practice.

Staff are overwhelmingly positive about the school and feel proud to work there. They report that leaders are supportive and help them achieve their best. Consequently, teachers are highly motivated and respond positively to your initiatives and well-planned professional development. You have created a strong culture where teachers and pupils are encouraged to be reflective and take responsibility for their own improvement.

You have addressed the areas for improvement identified at the last inspection effectively. You and your leaders have successfully ensured that teaching assistants make a consistently strong contribution to pupils' learning. Teaching assistants have received good-quality training and guidance, which has allowed them to become confident and proactive in their roles. They show initiative and independence and give clear and precise advice to the groups of pupils they work with. Pupils make the most of this help and they make more progress as a result.

You were also asked to improve pupils' mathematical skills. You and your leaders have overhauled the mathematics curriculum. Planned activities enable pupils to develop their fluency and reasoning skills well and many are becoming confident at solving mathematical problems expressed in words.

Safeguarding is effective.

The arrangements for safeguarding are effective. Together with other school leaders and governors, you take effective action to keep pupils safe and have a strong culture for safeguarding. Records and systems for protecting pupils, including pre-employment checks for staff, child protection training and updates, are detailed and of high quality. The checks you carry out when recruiting new staff are in line with national requirements to ensure the suitability of staff to work with children. The single central record is meticulously kept.

A clear culture of safeguarding practice is embedded across the school. Senior leaders and governors ensure that training is up to date and reviewed regularly. Staff are vigilant and know what to do to log and refer any concerns if needed. One member of staff told me, 'Safeguarding is everyone's responsibility', which is a view that permeates throughout the work of the school. Your systems are effective in enabling you to take timely and appropriate action on behalf of pupils. School documentation confirms that any concerns are followed up diligently and leaders work closely with external agencies to minimise children's risk of harm. Pupils say that they feel safe and that if they have concerns they know they can talk to adults in the school. Pupils say that teachers sort out any issues quickly.

Inspection findings

- A key line of enquiry to ascertain that the school remained good was to determine how successful school leaders have been at lifting overall attendance and reducing the rate of persistent absence of disadvantaged pupils and those who have special educational needs (SEN) and/or disabilities. In 2016, the

persistent absence of these groups of pupils had been well above the national average. School records show that this high rate of absence was due to small numbers of pupils who missed school through reasons well beyond the control of the school. Your vigilant approach to ensuring that all groups of pupils attend school regularly has paid dividends. Attendance has improved over the last year and is continuing to improve further. Pupils' attendance is currently in line with the national average and there is no discernible difference between rates of absence for disadvantaged pupils and others in the school.

- Another aspect I examined was whether pupils' progress in writing was fast enough. This was because, in 2017, the progress of pupils at the end of key stage 2 was much higher in reading and in mathematics than it was in writing. Our joint observations of pupils' learning during the inspection, and our scrutiny of work in their books, confirm the school's current assessment information, which shows that pupils make strong gains in their writing skills. Leaders' whole-school strategy to develop pupils' ability to edit and improve their writing is highly effective. Pupils in all year groups were seen to be writing with fluency and precision. For instance, in Year 1, pupils were seen to be identifying alliteration as a technique to liven up their descriptive writing and were confidently using possessive apostrophes when writing dialogue.
- Observations of learning made with you, and our joint scrutiny of pupils' work, show that the teaching of writing is consistently strong across the school. Staff training has improved teachers' subject knowledge markedly and expectations are high. Spelling is taught well. Teachers expect pupils to apply their spelling rules in their writing and when errors are made, teachers routinely pick this up and so help pupils to improve their work. Teachers insist that pupils apply their writing skills well to produce high-quality work. As a result, pupils demonstrate sophisticated sentence structure and write with precision.
- The school works closely with the other schools in its soft federation to moderate and check the accuracy of teachers' assessments of pupils' writing at the end of key stage 2. You agree that some of your assessments of pupils' writing at the end of Year 6 in 2017 did not fully recognise the skills that these pupils had shown and were not generous enough.
- My next line of enquiry looked at how successful leaders have been at reducing the differences in the rate of progress made by disadvantaged pupils, along with pupils who have SEN and/or disabilities, and other pupils. You track the progress of these groups of vulnerable pupils very carefully and you make sure that your assessment information is accurate by cross-checking your data with the work in pupils' books.
- Your assessment information for the first two terms of this year shows that the small numbers of disadvantaged pupils in most year groups make similar, and sometimes better, progress than their peers in writing and mathematics. This was confirmed when we looked at their books, which showed strong gains in knowledge and skills throughout the last two terms. Disadvantaged pupils make consistently good and sometimes rapid progress in reading as a result of the good-quality teaching they receive. Governors keep a close eye on how the pupil premium funding is spent. They have an accurate understanding of its impact on

pupils' outcomes and do not shy away from asking challenging questions.

- Pupils who have SEN and/or disabilities are making faster progress than in the recent past. Your assessment information shows, overall, a diminishing difference between the progress of these pupils and that of others. You recognise that there is still more to do. This group of pupils are still making slower progress than others in mathematics in Year 1 and Year 6 and in writing in Year 5. In these years, the mathematical fluency and reasoning of pupils who have SEN and/or disabilities are not developing as quickly as in other pupils.
- My final line of enquiry focused on how well leaders, including governors, are ensuring that the needs of pupils who have SEN and/or disabilities are being fully met. The leader of SEN and/or disabilities, your inclusion leader, is a strong and determined leader. She has improved leadership systems to track pupils' progress, and staff training and support has led to a continuing improvement in the quality of teaching for these pupils. Leaders have ensured that carefully crafted individual learning plans and targets are in place and teachers use their assessments well to inform future teaching.
- You have created an excellent environment in the 'Nest' for pupils who have particular social or emotional needs. Teaching within this nurture unit is both challenging and supportive. Parents of pupils who have SEN and/or disabilities speak highly of the support they receive and how closely the school works with them to both identify and address the specific needs of their children. One parent wrote: 'The school has gone above and beyond to accommodate my son including spray painting edges to help him to see steps and trip hazards with his limited vision. They have supported him fully starting reception and despite all his specialists predicting that he would struggle in mainstream school he has settled extremely well and is content and happy there.'

Next steps for the school

Leaders and those responsible for governance should ensure that:

- staff continue to work closely with partner schools to refine teachers' assessments of pupils' writing at the end of key stage 2 so that it is a more accurate reflection of what pupils know, understand and can do
- the differences between the progress of pupils who have SEN and/or disabilities and others diminishes at a faster rate, particularly in mathematics.

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

Yours sincerely

Michael Merchant
Ofsted Inspector

Information about the inspection

During this inspection, I spoke with you, senior and middle leaders, the chair of the governing body and one other governor, and a group of parents. I also held a telephone conversation with an officer from South Gloucestershire local authority. We made visits to lessons to observe pupils' learning and to scrutinise their work. I looked at pupils' workbooks in detail with you and the deputy headteacher. I also talked to pupils and listened to their views of the school and listened to groups of pupils from Year 2 and Year 6 read to me.

I considered a range of documentary evidence, which included the school's self-evaluation, development plans, and school performance information. I also looked at monitoring records for teaching, learning and assessment, your analysis of pupils' attendance, and behaviour and safeguarding documentation.

In addition, I took account of 105 responses to Parent View, Ofsted's online survey, and the 88 responses to the free-text messaging service. I gathered the views of staff through the online questionnaire and through discussions during the inspection.