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Mr Mark Bacon
Headteacher
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Dear Mr Bacon

Short inspection of Churchdown Village Junior School

Following my visit to the school on 11 January 2018, 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 June 2014.

This school continues to be good.

The leadership team has maintained the good quality of education in the school since the last inspection. You lead the school in an open and collaborative way. You value the contribution of others and have successfully delegated leadership responsibilities more widely. Consequently, staff and other members of the school community are highly committed to the school. Staff morale is very high. This is because staff are united in a common mission to provide an enriching education which encourages pupils to achieve their potential. As one governor told me, 'Staff go above and beyond for the pupils.'

Leaders know the school well. They readily acknowledge weaknesses, which enables them to take effective and timely action to overcome them. You are not complacent or dismissive about what needs to be done. This spirit of transparency and objectivity is also evident in your willingness to 'look outward'. You have been proactive in creating or joining partnerships with other schools and professionals. These partnerships have enabled staff to stay abreast of, and share, the latest guidance and practice. Furthermore, you have welcomed support from the local authority and other educational consultants in order to cross-reference your evaluation of the school's effectiveness. Your outlook has prevented the school from becoming insular and, as a result, is enabling improvement in many areas of the school's work.

Leaders are well supported by governors, who are loyal and work hard for the school. Governing body minutes show that governors are increasingly providing

leaders with challenge on pupils' achievement. They ask searching questions about particular groups of pupils and do not shy away from asking about underperformance, where this is the case. Consequently, leaders are being held to greater account. An appropriate balance of support and challenge characterises the relationship between leaders and governors.

During your six years in post, you, other leaders and staff have fostered a caring school culture in which all pupils are known and valued. Pupils embody the school's ethos, captured in the acronym 'HEART' (honesty, enthusiasm, aspiration, respect and team work). Parents also feel welcome and involved in the life of the school. They too contribute to this supportive culture. Ninety-seven per cent of parents who responded to the Parent View survey stated that they would recommend the school. A similar proportion of respondents agreed that the school was well led. They also agreed that pupils were taught well, made good progress and behaved well.

At the beginning of the inspection, we agreed on the key lines of enquiry to be considered during the day. These included establishing the effectiveness of actions taken to raise pupils' achievement in reading, writing and mathematics by the time they leave the school. The second line of enquiry considered the extent to which areas for improvement emerging from the previous inspection have been addressed. These concern the quality of teaching, and the monitoring of middle-ability pupils in mathematics. Third, we investigated whether behaviour is still a significant strength of the school, as identified at the previous inspection. Finally, we considered whether safeguarding is effective. These lines of enquiry, where they have not already been referred to, are considered below under 'Safeguarding' and 'Inspection findings'.

Safeguarding is effective.

You and the deputy headteacher, as safeguarding leads, have a confident grasp of responsibilities, child-protection issues and school procedures. Consequently, you have ensured that all staff have been appropriately trained so that they know what to do should they have concerns about a child. The online concern referral system is accessible to all staff and records all necessary information. This enables relevant staff to take appropriate action to keep pupils safe. If staff are unsure as to whether a referral is necessary, they know they can speak to you for advice.

Checks to ensure that staff are suitable to work with children are in place. These are comprehensive and up to date. Staff and governors involved in appointing staff to the school have also been trained in safer recruitment. This ensures that staff joining the school are suitable to work with children.

Pupils who spoke with me said that they feel safe in school. This is because they are happy to talk to different members of staff if they have any worries. One pupil said, 'You could probably go to anybody in the school. They would help you out.' Pupils also feel safe because they are taught to manage risk in different situations. For example, pupils have been taught about the dangers of fireworks and how to cross the road safely. Outside speakers and groups have familiarised pupils with the

dangers of alcohol and drugs. Pupils also have a good understanding of how to stay safe online.

Inspection findings

- Teachers have good subject knowledge. This enables them to teach with confidence and engage pupils through interesting tasks and lively discussions. Work in pupils' books shows that pupils acquire skills and knowledge appropriate to their ages across their different subjects. Pupils are provided with numerous opportunities to learn and apply technical writing skills, such as features of punctuation and grammar. They learn to write in different forms, such as letters and diary entries. Moreover, pupils learn how to structure extended pieces through appropriate paragraphing and editing.
- Pupils of different abilities, including middle-ability pupils, are set work that meets their academic needs. Pupils benefit from different resources and teaching aids, depending on their specific needs. Teaching assistants are used well to support lower-ability individuals or groups of pupils to access their learning. They ask useful questions to help pupils think more deeply. For example, during one observed lesson, I overheard a teaching assistant rework a question to help a pupil move forward. Pupils had been asked to consider the question, 'Why should we look after our world?' The teaching assistant asked the pupil, 'What would happen if we didn't look after our world?' to help him answer the initial question.
- Pupils across the school are encouraged to participate in class discussion, consider ideas and reflect on different viewpoints. This is reinforced through the 'agree, build or challenge' approach used by teachers in class discussion. Pupils are prompted to respond to the ideas of their peers in these various ways, which increases their engagement.
- Pupils exhibit positive attitudes to learning. They share good relationships with staff and take a keen interest in their studies. Pupils are attentive and focused on the task in hand, either when working independently or with each other. Pupils told me that they feel challenged in most of their subjects and are helped to learn when they struggle. One pupil said, 'The learning is fun. The curriculum is very good.'
- In 2017, Year 6 pupils' attainment in writing and mathematics by the time they left the school was lower than average. In previous years, attainment has been in line with or above average. Progress from pupils' starting points was also below average across subjects in 2017, particularly in writing and mathematics. However, the school's own progress information for current pupils, and the work presented in their books, indicates that they are making stronger progress. This is particularly true for the current Year 6. Nevertheless, leaders and governors acknowledge that support directed at pupils who fall behind needs to be better evaluated to ensure that it has most impact.
- Leaders are establishing a mastery approach to mathematics. Consequently, pupils are presented with more opportunities to problem solve and explain their reasoning and working out. This is evident in their work, where pupils' grappling with difficult questions is visible. This approach is helping pupils to develop a

more sophisticated conceptual understanding so that their mathematical learning is built on a more solid foundation.

- Staff are increasingly using the school's assessment system to monitor pupils' progress effectively in mathematics. This is enabling them to become better at quickly identifying those pupils who fall behind. Staff are aware of the importance of securing higher achievement from middle-ability pupils, in light of their weak performance last year. Leaders have prioritised this group of pupils in their improvement plans. Consequently, the tracking system is being used to monitor this group closely and improve their achievement.
- Pupils are well behaved. They enjoy coming to school because they feel part of the community and encouraged to do their best. This shows in their friendly, polite and approachable manner. Pupils respect each other's personal space; they play sensibly in the playground and move calmly through corridors. Pupils who spoke with me said there is 'hardly any bullying'. This view is also supported by those parents who responded to Parent View.
- Attendance has been above average over time for different groups of pupils. Correspondingly, persistent absence has been below average over time. Published information also shows that exclusions have been broadly in line with average or below.

Next steps for the school

Leaders and those responsible for governance should ensure that:

- action to develop pupils' writing skills and mastery of mathematics continues to be taken, and fully evaluated for evidence of impact, so that pupils make the progress of which they are capable by the time they leave the school
- extra support provided to those pupils who fall behind is fully evaluated for impact and targeted where it is needed most.

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

Yours sincerely

Steve Smith
Her Majesty's Inspector

Information about the inspection

During this inspection, I spoke to you, representatives of the governing body, pupils and an adviser from the local authority.

You and I visited lessons to observe pupils' attitudes to learning. I also scrutinised the work in pupils' books.

A range of documentary evidence was considered, which included the school's self-evaluation and school improvement plan. I considered governing body minutes, attendance information and notes of visits from external advisers. I also reviewed information relating to pupils' progress. Additionally, I scrutinised various safeguarding records, including those relating to the suitability of staff to work with children.

I took account of 67 responses to the Parent View online survey.