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Mrs Jo-Anne Rutt
Headteacher
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Dear Mrs Rutt

Short inspection of Beechcroft Infant School

Following my visit to the school on 22 February 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 January 2014.

This school continues to be good.

The leadership team have maintained the good quality of education in the school since the previous inspection. They have successfully addressed all areas which were identified as requiring some improvement. The feedback that teachers provide to pupils about their work consistently follows the school's agreed policy. This helps pupils to be clear about how they can improve their learning. There is now a more systematic approach to the teaching of phonics. This enables pupils to learn quickly and apply their skills in both reading and writing activities. Leaders have improved the way that they track the progress that pupils make. This ensures that pupils' progress is checked regularly and additional help is swiftly put in place when required.

The school successfully meets its aim for 'children to be happy, confident individuals and lifelong learners'. There is a warm and welcoming feel to this very caring school and parents and carers appreciate its 'lovely atmosphere and vibe'.

You are justifiably proud of the way in which you adapt the curriculum to meet the needs of your pupils. This enables them to thrive. Parents report that they are very pleased with the school. They are particularly praiseworthy of the education which is 'aimed at each individual child's qualities and needs'.

You and your leaders, including the governors, have an accurate understanding of the effectiveness of the school. You work closely with other schools in the local area to share professional development and best practice. These strong links also

provide opportunities for external challenge which is used to improve teaching.

Safeguarding is effective.

Ensuring the safety of every pupil who attends this school is at the heart of all that the school does. You and your staff know your families very well. The extensive training you have all received enables you to swiftly identify any concerns, including signs of abuse or neglect and mental health issues which impact on pupils' welfare. You work closely with your pre-schools and your local junior school to share key information and work together to support vulnerable families. Working alongside specialist external agencies, you always make sure that the needs of the pupils are paramount to any decision that is made. You are proud of the local recognition you receive as a school with high-quality safeguarding practices and procedures.

The well-trained governors are extremely clear about their role in keeping pupils safe and undertake their responsibilities effectively. Those responsible for the recruitment of staff make sure that appropriate checks are carried out before new employees start their job.

Pupils report that they feel safe and are very clear that there is always an adult in school who they can talk to if they have a worry or a problem. Regular fire drills ensure that the pupils know what to do in the event of an incident. They talk confidently about keeping safe when using the internet and understand why they need to wear jackets that keep them very visible when out on school trips.

Inspection findings

- An ever-increasing proportion of your children start school with very limited speech, poorly developed physical skills and have difficulty expressing and managing their feelings. The proportion of children who reach a good level of development at the end of Reception is consistently below average. In order to accelerate the progress made in Reception, you have recently introduced a number of positive initiatives to meet their needs. You have placed a stronger emphasis on providing Reception children with first-hand learning experiences. This has not only captured their interest but is helping them to develop their vocabulary. For example, having lunch out at a nearby Chinese restaurant brought their Chinese New Year celebrations alive. It also helped them to extend their vocabulary. Fun music and movement activities help Reception children to coordinate and control their arms and hands and support their writing skills. Effective use is also made of a specialist coach to develop their running, jumping and balancing skills. In addition to this, your Reception teachers are also encouraging the children to think about how they learn. For example, they are able to explain when they persevered with an activity or worked together with a friend to solve a problem.
- Recent opportunities for Reception teachers to observe their Year 1 colleagues have enabled them to gain a deeper understanding of the expectations for this year group. In turn, observations made by Year 1 colleagues of the Reception teachers support a smoother transition between the two key stages.

- You know that because the children start school with poorly developed speaking skills, it takes longer for them to grasp their understanding and use of phonics. This is reflected in the most recent below-average results of the Year 1 phonics checks. However, pupils continue to make steady progress and, by the end of Year 2, pupils develop a clearer understanding of how to apply their phonic knowledge. Consequently, most pupils achieve the expected standard before they move on to key stage 2.
- To support you in your continuing journey to accelerate pupils' phonic skills, you have joined a local improvement programme which provides your teachers with additional training and external moderation. You have also made a number of changes to the teaching of phonics, which is having a positive impact on the development of pupils' skills. For example, the school day now starts with a phonics session. Teachers then provide rich opportunities for the pupils to reinforce the newly acquired skills. This enables pupils to use and apply their new learning at different times during the school day.
- You are justifiably proud of the overall progress that your pupils make during their time at Beechcroft. This is reflected both in the most recent Year 2 national tests in reading, writing and mathematics at the end of key stage 1 and in the pupils' current work books. You rigorously track individual pupils' progress and robustly hold the teachers to account for their performance. The strong culture of working together and sharing best practice pervades the teaching team.
- Teachers in key stage 1 are adept at crafting interesting learning opportunities which fully engage and motivate the pupils. For example, having recently learned about Australia, a group of Year 2 pupils were able to talk confidently about many of the key features of this country. They displayed a secure knowledge of the wildlife and named some of the sites that Australia is famous for, such as the Sydney Harbour Bridge and the Opera House. Year 1 pupils demonstrated their growing vocabulary and imagination when they talked about looking after 'dragon eggs'. Parents who responded to the inspection questionnaire pointed out that the school 'offers so many different opportunities and learning experiences such as dressing up days, trips out, and visitors in and this makes attending enjoyable'.
- Although steadily declining, rates of persistent absence remain higher than the national average. Despite the relentless and robust systems in place to remind parents of the need to bring their children to school regularly, and on time, there are still a determined few who fail to engage with the school. You have accurately recognised the need to further extend the way that you work with parents. You are looking at ways to help them understand their role as co-educators. For example, by suggesting activities that parents might do with their children at home which link with their topic, you are encouraging them to take an interest in school life and learning.

Next steps for the school

Leaders and those responsible for governance should ensure that:

- the recent initiatives introduced in the Reception class to accelerate the children's progress, particularly in speaking, reading and writing, are carefully monitored and evaluated
- the school further engages with parents so that they bring their children to school regularly and learn how to support their children's learning by taking a more active role in the wide range of adult opportunities that are made available to them.

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

Yours sincerely

Lorna Brackstone
Her Majesty's Inspector

Information about the inspection

During the inspection, I met with you and your deputy headteacher to discuss the school's effectiveness. I held discussions with four governors, including the chair of the governing body. I met with your school improvement officer and had a short telephone call with a local authority officer. I visited the classrooms and looked at a sample of Year 2 books with you and your deputy headteacher. I examined documents, including information about the safeguarding of children and the progress that they make in their learning. I also looked at the school's self-evaluation document and improvement plan. I considered 18 responses and free-text comments submitted to the inspection questionnaire, Parent View. I also considered the responses of 28 members of staff.