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Mr James Rodgers
Head of School
The Bishop David Brown School
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Dear Mr Rodgers

Short inspection of The Bishop David Brown School

Following my visit to the school on 21 February 2018 with Francois Walker, 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 April 2014.

Based on the evidence gathered during this short inspection, I have identified some priorities for improvement which I advise the school to address. In light of these priorities, the school's next inspection will be a full section 5 inspection. **There is no change to the school's current overall effectiveness grade of good as a result of this inspection.**

Since your appointment as head of school in September 2017, you have acted swiftly and resolutely to address the issues that led to a decline in standards over the past two years. You quickly assessed what needed to be done and have brought a greater sense of clarity and direction to the school, underpinned by a strong moral purpose to do the very best for the pupils in your care.

You have strengthened your senior and middle leadership teams, building a tangible sense of team spirit where everyone is focused on improving learning. You have tightened up the way you track pupils' progress, ensuring that your assessments are more accurate and reliable. The quality of teaching is now more closely monitored and staff are held to account much more rigorously for the progress that pupils are making. You have made some curriculum changes which are helping to raise pupils' aspirations, and you have developed strong relationships with local primary schools to aid pupils' transition experience.

The information you shared with me indicates that standards are rising across all year groups and subjects. However, you appreciate that the rates of progress for disadvantaged pupils and the most able are lagging behind. This is because some staff do not pitch work at an appropriate level or have high enough expectations of

what these pupils can do and achieve. You are using your pupil premium funding imaginatively to provide, for example, small-group work and work experience for targeted pupils, but you recognise that leaders and governors need to check more carefully that these actions are working.

A large majority of pupils, staff and parents recognise and appreciate the changes you have implemented in a short space of time. In particular, many said that behaviour has greatly improved, and pupils told inspectors that they are making more progress in lessons as a result. There is a warm and friendly atmosphere that pervades the school and a great sense of pride among staff and pupils. As one parent said, 'The school has a very strong family feel'. Relationships between staff and pupils and between pupils themselves are strong and harmonious. We saw many examples of pupils working collaboratively in lessons, discussing their ideas articulately and enthusiastically. Pupils value the support that they receive from staff and the opportunities on offer to enrich their learning, such as the recent geography trip to Guildford.

Governors are supportive of the school and are gaining confidence to challenge leaders more robustly. The chief executive officer of the Unity Schools Trust is a regular presence, offering you and your team valuable support and guidance. Collaboration with schools in the trust and the local learning partnership is having a positive impact on developing teachers' professional skills.

Leaders, governors and trustees are very aware of the areas for development and are focusing on the right things to bring about sustained improvement. However, you recognise that the school development plan needs to focus more sharply on improving outcomes for those pupils whose progress has been weak in the past, especially disadvantaged pupils and the most able.

Safeguarding is effective.

Leaders and governors have embedded a culture of safeguarding within the school. Two specific governors regularly check safeguarding arrangements, ensuring that they are fit for purpose and that record-keeping is thorough. Effective systems are in place, which are shared and understood by all staff. Frequent training ensures that staff and governors' knowledge is kept up to date. Pupils said that there are adults in school they trust and whom they are happy to speak to if they have any concerns. The large majority of pupils who responded to the online survey said that bullying was rare and that they had confidence that any incidents would be dealt with.

Pupils learn how to keep themselves safe in taught lessons and through drop-down days and tutor-time sessions. For example, one of us saw a citizenship lesson where pupils were discussing issues connected with forced marriage. Pupils are encouraged to voice their ideas to school leaders, particularly on the subject of anti-bullying.

The school has established links with outside agencies focused on supporting pupils

with mental health issues. Staff know their pupils well and use this information to follow up on pupils' absences to ensure that they are safe.

Inspection findings

- Sometimes, pupils' learning is slower than it should be because teachers have not pitched work at an appropriate level, especially for disadvantaged pupils and the most able. For some pupils the work may be too challenging and for others not challenging enough. Where teachers use their knowledge of individual pupils' capabilities and set work accordingly, such as was observed in some science, geography and religious studies lessons, pupils learn faster. Leaders are aware that there is inconsistency in the level of expectation across and within some subjects, so the rate of pupils' progress is variable.
- Teachers have good subject knowledge and they are skilled at introducing new vocabulary to pupils. In class, pupils speak confidently and can express their ideas verbally and with clarity. Teachers encourage them to develop their oracy with some well-targeted questioning. However, pupils do not always transfer their verbal ideas into written pieces of work across the curriculum and consequently the quality of their writing is weaker at times.
- We saw some good examples in lessons and in pupils' books where teachers gave meaningful advice to pupils about how to improve their work, in line with the school's policy. Pupils are generally very committed to responding to feedback. Where feedback is most effective, it helps pupils make faster progress. However, you recognise that teachers' advice to help pupils to develop their knowledge, skills and understanding is too variable.
- Middle leaders are a strong and committed group. They are developing their skills quickly, and value the professional training opportunities they are given to work with colleagues both across the trust and within the local learning partnership. They understand and support the greater sense of urgency needed to help pupils make faster progress. They have welcomed the increased level of accountability and scrutiny that you have introduced. In those subjects where pupils' progress has been particularly weak in the past, such as in science and modern foreign languages, middle leaders are receiving focused support and challenge from senior colleagues. As a result, expectations in these subjects are higher and pupils are making better progress.

Next steps for the school

Leaders and those responsible for governance should ensure that:

- teaching is appropriately challenging, so that pupils make stronger progress, especially the most able and disadvantaged
- development plans focus more sharply on raising outcomes for all pupils, especially disadvantaged pupils and the most able, and that actions taken are monitored and evaluated to make sure they are working.

I am copying this letter to the chair of the governing body and the chief executive

officer of the multi-academy trust, the regional schools commissioner and the director of children's services for Surrey. This letter will be published on the Ofsted website.

Yours sincerely

Paula Sargent
Ofsted Inspector

Information about the inspection

We met with you, your leadership team, middle leaders and staff responsible for safeguarding and attendance. I also met two members of the governing body and the chief executive officer of the Unity Schools Trust. We met with pupils in all year groups, both formally and informally, to discuss their learning and their views about school life. Together with members of your leadership team, we looked at learning in a variety of subjects across different year groups. One of us, together with you, also carried out a scrutiny of pupils' work in their books. We looked at school documentation, including current assessment information, the school's improvement plan, self-evaluation and attendance information for current pupils. We considered 78 responses to Ofsted's online survey, Parent View, including 76 written comments by parents. We also took into account responses by 57 staff and 188 pupils to their questionnaires.