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Mrs Tracey Fletcher  
Headteacher  
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Dear Mrs Fletcher

### **Short inspection of Bladon Church of England Primary School**

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

#### **This school continues to be good.**

The leadership team has maintained the good quality of education in the school since the last inspection. Since your appointment in September 2016, you have continued to build on your small school's strong traditions. You lead the school with steadfast commitment, always aiming for pupils to enjoy their learning and reach the highest standards across a broad and varied curriculum. You bring a composed and thoughtful approach, determined that pupils gain the benefits of high-quality learning experiences in a supportive and nurturing environment. Consequently, you are held in high regard by parents and carers, pupils and the local community. Your leadership has ensured that the school continues to experience success. Parents are overwhelmingly positive and, as one commented, 'The headteacher has steered the school to prioritise each child's welfare, happiness and individuality.'

Pupils' enthusiasm for all that is on offer is palpable as they exude confidence and self-assurance in their day-to-day activities. Their unwavering daily delight in the school is exemplified by their penchant for arriving early in order to participate in the school's 'wake and shake' session, followed by quiet contemplation in a well-observed meditation time. Pupils participate actively and with powerful concentration, appreciating the value of such activities in preparing them for a positive start to the day. You have developed the curriculum particularly strongly, enabling pupils to experience greater success in even more subjects. For example, in 2017, all pupils at the end of Year 2 and Year 6 met age-related expectations in science.

You have also given due prominence to the school's core values, such as

perseverance, respect and friendship. One parent commented, 'Bladon school is school at the heart of the community. All the children know one another and the ethos of kindness and respect is fostered by the headteacher and the staff.' Pupils rise to your expectations and are well behaved and worthy ambassadors of the school. Older pupils speak positively about their friendships, the support of their teachers and their enjoyment of lessons, commenting that, 'Learning is fun at Bladon.'

You have addressed soundly the areas for improvement identified at your previous inspection. At the time of the last inspection, leaders were asked to strengthen the quality of teaching and raise pupils' achievement further in key stage 1. Following a dip in standards in reading and writing in key stage 1 in 2016, you have keenly set about developing appropriate plans to tackle areas that needed to progress. With the support of a nearby headteacher of an outstanding school, your proficient evaluation of the school's strengths and weaknesses is leading to improvement. As a result, the quality of teaching and learning has been further strengthened, and outcomes for pupils are now better, including in key stage 1.

In 2017, pupils achieved well. In reading, writing and mathematics the proportion of pupils who met age-related expectations exceeded that seen nationally in both key stages 1 and 2. Furthermore, the proportion of pupils achieving at greater depth in all subjects was similar to or above that seen nationally. Nevertheless, you agree that there is still greater scope to push standards higher in writing in key stage 2 and accelerate pupils' progress, particularly for the school's higher-attaining pupils. Similarly, pupils' presentation is also an aspect that requires further development.

You and your governors work well together. Governors bring a wealth of experience, having served the school for many years. They are loyal and dependable supporters of the school and are determined that it serve the local community well. Governors have played an instrumental role in ensuring that, over time, appropriate adaptations are made that enable you, the staff and pupils to meet the demands of the primary curriculum. For example, governors are contributing well to plans to develop the outdoor learning area for the school's youngest pupils further. Governors have a secure understanding of how the school's performance compares to national benchmarks, but are less certain when monitoring the performance of current groups, such as the school's higher-attaining pupils. Further emphasis on developing this aspect will enable governors to be confident in their ability to independently hold you to account and play a greater part in determining the strategic direction of the school.

### **Safeguarding is effective.**

Arrangements to safeguard pupils are effective. You have made sure that a wide range of supplementary advice is made available to parents and pupils through the school's website, such as road safety information. Staff teach pupils about potential risks they can face and how to manage these. As a result, pupils are developing a mature understanding of how to take care, particularly of their emotional well-being

and mental health. They were able to tell me, in some detail, how to share worries and concerns to keep a healthy mindset. They are also knowledgeable about online safety, understanding how to report any concerns including, for example, about the dangers of online scams.

Governors conduct regular monitoring visits to assure themselves that pupils are kept safe. Since the last inspection, leaders have made a number of improvements to the school buildings, such as ensuring that access is more tightly controlled. Pupils are appreciative of such measures and told me that they feel safe in school.

## **Inspection findings**

- During this inspection, we looked closely at specific aspects of the school's provision including: the effectiveness of safeguarding arrangements; the achievement of the most able pupils in key stage 2 in reading and writing, and the quality of the school's curriculum.
- Pupils enjoy reading. The school is well resourced and pupils say that they have a good range of appealing literature to choose from. Pupils read accurately and with expression. The oldest pupils are able to talk confidently about their favourite authors and genres. The school's assessment information shows that pupils make good progress and achieve well. For example, in 2017, all pupils met age-related expectations at the end of key stage one. The proportion who meet the standard expected in the Year 1 phonics screening check has also been consistently above that seen nationally for the last three years.
- You have high expectations. As a result, you monitor teaching and learning carefully and ensure that teachers receive helpful advice on how to improve. Pupils say that they enjoy learning because their teachers make lessons fun. For example, pupils in Years 5 and 6 worked enthusiastically, engaging animatedly with one another to analyse and interpret a poem by Roger McGough.
- Pupils write for a range of different purposes. Pupils achieve well, and are committed to improving their writing skills and technique. One pupil commented, 'When writing, we focus on making it (our efforts) even better.' Nevertheless, some pupils recognise that they would like to further improve their handwriting and presentation skills.
- Staff are proactive in forging strong relationships with parents from the word go. Comprehensive home visits and meetings with pre-school providers ensure that children's needs are known and understood before they join the school. As a result, children settle well and quickly take advantage of all that is on offer in the early years. Children make good progress and are well prepared for the challenges that lie ahead in key stage 1.
- You have ensured that the school's curriculum holds high appeal for all pupils and provides meaningful learning experiences on a regular basis. Regular themed weeks, such as the recent science week, contribute well to enriching pupils' learning as well as maintaining a strong partnership between the local community, pupils, parents and staff. Opportunities to write across the curriculum are prevalent. The curriculum fully supports the school's mantra of

'Every day, in every way, we are striving to be the best we can be.'

- You are gradually raising expectations and ensuring that you are increasingly well informed about how well pupils are learning across the whole curriculum. With the support of your school improvement partner, you are developing thorough systems for monitoring and tracking pupils' performance in the foundation subjects. As with the core subjects, this shows that pupils are making good progress, and nearly all pupils are achieving or exceeding age-related expectations. A wide range of extra-curricular activities, including singing club and a variety of sporting opportunities, further enhance pupils' experiences.
- The school's specialist teacher of physical education (PE) is highly committed and determined that pupils excel at and enjoy this subject to the fullest. Despite this being a small school, there are no barriers that stand in the way of implementing an impressive curriculum. Pupils wax lyrical about the range of opportunities on offer, saying PE is their favourite subject. Testament to such high-quality provision is the super achievement of pupils in recently coming second in the Oxfordshire Sports Awards. The school's sports ambassadors are proud of the additional responsibilities they hold and the support that they provide to younger pupils.

### **Next steps for the school**

Leaders and those responsible for governance should ensure that:

- they boost pupils' progress and raise standards even higher in writing, particularly for the most able pupils
- pupils' written presentation improves, particularly in key stage 2
- the performance of groups, including the higher-attaining pupils, is kept under watchful review.

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 Oxfordshire. This letter will be published on the Ofsted website.

Yours sincerely

Elizabeth Farr  
**Her Majesty's Inspector**

### **Information about the inspection**

I met with you and both the chair and vice-chair of the governing body. I held a telephone conversation with a representative of the local authority. I also met with six pupils in key stage 2 and talked to pupils during learning activities. I observed learning in all classes, all jointly with the headteacher. I considered 46 responses from parents to Ofsted's online questionnaire Parent View, including 34 free-text comments. I also took account of a letter from a parent, received via email. 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 own evaluation of the school's effectiveness.