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Mr Martin Hancock
Headteacher
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Dear Mr Hancock

Short inspection of Bickleigh Down Church of England Primary School

Following my visit to the school on 20 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 2015.

This school continues to be good.

The leadership team has maintained the good quality of education in the school since the last inspection.

Leaders know the school well. You are reflective and honest about what needs to be done. You and your leaders provide a vibrant and inspiring education for the pupils. Consequently, pupils exhibit positive attitudes to learning. You are well supported by the governing body. Governors readily acknowledge weaknesses, which enables them to take effective and timely action to overcome them.

You have successfully tackled the areas for improvement identified at the time of the previous inspection in 2015. You plan the curriculum effectively to broaden the perspectives of pupils. Consequently, they develop a deep understanding of fundamental British values and of Christian values. This is especially strong in preparing pupils before transitioning to secondary school. You have made sure that pupils of all abilities experience a wide range of extra-curricular activities. For example, sign language is taught in every year group. Pupils also learn well in other subjects, including music, religious education and art. Topics in science, history and geography capture pupils' imagination.

Children in the early years receive high-quality support and make good progress from their starting points. Most pupils go on to make strong progress across key stage 1. In 2017, the proportion of pupils working at the expected standard in key stage 1 in reading, writing and mathematics was better than national averages. At key stage 2, pupils' progress in reading was above average and in mathematics it

was well above average. Progress in writing was average. Current initiatives are leading to a greater proportion of Year 6 pupils working at higher levels in writing, as shown by progress in workbooks since September 2017.

Parents and carers are welcomed and encouraged to become involved in the life of the school. They are extremely complimentary about the school and the education their children receive. Positive parental relationships help to break down barriers to learning and raise expectations of pupils. There was an overwhelmingly positive response to Parent View, the online inspection questionnaire, gathered as part of the inspection. One parent summarised the view of many with the comment, 'I can't speak highly enough of this school in every area.'

Safeguarding is effective.

You and the deputy headteacher, as the designated safeguarding lead, have a firm understanding of procedures and responsibilities for keeping children safe. The school works closely with a wide range of agencies to gain support for children and their families. Training for safeguarding and child protection is regular and comprehensive, enabling staff and governors to fully discharge their duties. You and your governors ensure that safeguarding arrangements are fit for purpose and records are detailed.

Pupils report that they feel safe in school. They know about different forms of bullying. Pupils report that bullying is rare and they know there is always an adult available to help them with any worries or concerns. They say that staff are approachable and that they would have no hesitation seeking help if they had a worry or concern. Pupils apply their knowledge of internet safety wisely when using laptops and tablets.

Inspection findings

At the start of the inspection, we agreed the particular aspects of the school's work on which the inspection would focus.

- The first line of enquiry explored the impact of teaching, learning and assessment on the high achievement evident in the 2017 national assessments.
- Pupils build on strong achievement in early years across Years 1 and 2. Leaders have made sure that pupils have access to a range of inspiring activities which challenge them to think hard about their learning. Evidence in pupils' books and assessment records shows that pupils of all abilities are making strong progress in English and mathematics. For example, pupils in Year 1 can count forwards and back with accuracy. They are also able to sort and classify a variety of shapes into groups. Pupils are making particularly strong progress in learning phonics and this is evident in their reading and writing. As a result, more pupils are achieving the higher standard in reading for their age.
- Work in books demonstrates that pupils in key stage 2 think creatively and debate challenging topics with self-assurance and enquiring minds. Pupils know how to use calculations effectively in mathematics. However, their problem-

solving and reasoning skills are not as well developed as they could be in lower key stage 2. Pupils' writing at the higher standard is improving as a result of effective teaching. Work in Year 5 and Year 6 books demonstrates that pupils are making rapid progress, especially in handwriting, punctuation and grammar. Leaders recognise that pupils' spelling is not yet as strong and are fully committed to improving this. They also know that this high standard is not consistently strong across the classes in lower key stage 2.

- My next line of enquiry was to evaluate the impact of leaders' actions to ensure that vulnerable pupils, including disadvantaged pupils and those who have special educational needs (SEN) and/or disabilities, are effectively supported to achieve their best. In 2017, progress for the small group of disadvantaged pupils from their unique starting points was higher than the national averages in reading, writing and mathematics but attainment was not as strong.
- School leaders use additional funding for disadvantaged pupils effectively to ensure that they are supported to make rapid improvements, especially in their writing. Leaders use precise targets to measure success from their starting points. Well-qualified and skilled teaching assistants provide highly effective and personalised support for individuals and small groups of pupils who have SEN and/or disabilities. Leaders take swift action when learning falters. Consequently, current pupils are making good progress.
- School governors have a good understanding of the school's overall provision for disadvantaged pupils and how this is helping pupils to be more successful in their learning. However, governors do not have a detailed awareness of the effectiveness of initiatives paid for by the additional funding, particularly of how these initiatives help the pupils to achieve the levels that they are capable of. This weakens governors' ability to hold leaders to account for this aspect of the school's work and this is an area for improvement.
- My final line of enquiry focused on the impact of leaders' actions to prepare pupils for the opportunities, responsibilities and experiences of life in modern Britain, through actively promoting fundamental British values.
- The school's curriculum has been reviewed and provides a wide range of interesting and stimulating activities. It has been developed to meet the needs of the children in this school and is enriched with a wide range of bespoke experiences that promote pupils' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development effectively. Tolerance and respect for others and an understanding of democracy are promoted well through the multi-faith curriculum. The school's Christian ethos instils in pupils a respect for values such as kindness and love. As a result, pupils are well prepared for life in modern Britain.

Next steps for the school

Leaders and those responsible for governance should ensure that:

- school governors carefully check that the school's use of additional funding is enabling the most able disadvantaged pupils to achieve the standards they are capable of

- the teaching of writing is strengthened so that more most-able pupils reach the higher standards by ensuring that teachers eliminate common spelling mistakes.

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

Yours sincerely

Susan Costello
Ofsted Inspector

Information about the inspection

During the inspection I met with you, the deputy headteacher and the SEN and disabilities coordinator. I also met the chair and members of the governing body. I met with a group of pupils and spoke to a school improvement adviser. Together, you and I observed learning in all classes and examined a sample of pupils' work over time in their books, alongside their progress information. I examined a range of documents, including self-evaluation by you and the governing body, improvement planning and documents relating to pupils' progress and safeguarding. I took account of the 56 responses to Ofsted's online survey, Parent View, texts and written responses from parents.