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Mrs Karen Allen
Headteacher
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Dear Mrs Allen

Short inspection of Burbage Church of England Infant School

Following my visit to the school on 5 June 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 October 2013.

This school continues to be good.

The leadership team has maintained the good quality of education in the school since the last inspection. In October 2017, you were appointed as executive headteacher of both Burbage Church of England Infant School and Burbage Junior School. Prior to that, you were headteacher of the infant school only. You have already begun to ensure a greater degree of shared activity and staff training between the infant and junior schools, along with an enhanced experience for pupils as they transfer to the junior school at the beginning of Year 3.

You have been active in tackling the areas to improve from the last inspection. In particular, you have strengthened the quality of teaching by introducing regular review meetings between staff teams and senior leaders. The purpose of these termly meetings is to ensure a precise focus on the progress, learning and welfare needs of pupils. This ensures that teachers can quickly put in place any extra support needed for individuals.

Your association with the Loughborough Learning Alliance means that you and your staff have regular opportunities to share good practice beyond the school and check the quality of each other's work.

You and your staff have developed an effective system for assessing and tracking pupils' progress in reading, writing and mathematics. Your latest assessments show that a higher proportion of pupils are currently on track to attain at the expected standard for their age, and at greater depth, in reading, writing and mathematics by

the end of Year 2, than in 2017. This suggests that you have sustained the improvements begun in 2017, following a sharp drop in standards in 2016. Your assessments over time also show that pupils typically make accelerated progress during Year 2, especially in writing. In Year 1, however, pupils' attainment and progress are typically less strong. Evidence from my observations of learning during the inspection and from the work in pupils' books confirms that your assessments are accurate.

The positive impact of teaching on current pupils' learning is clear to see, in all year groups. In the early years, a revised approach to the curriculum this academic year has ensured that children progress well and show a tangible zest for learning. In Years 1 and 2, pupils were observed to be confident and enthusiastic readers and writers.

Their workbooks show, however, that pupils are typically less secure in the more technical aspects of their writing, namely spelling and handwriting. A number of pupils misspell words with common letter patterns, such as 'high' or 'came'. The quality of pupils' handwriting is inconsistent. This is especially the case in Year 1, where some pupils were observed to hold their pencils in an incorrect manner. You have identified spelling and handwriting as areas of focus for the school.

You have strengthened your leadership team by developing the role of middle leaders. For example, the leaders of English and mathematics join you and the deputy headteacher in checking the quality of teaching and learning in all year groups. They are confident to work alongside colleagues to share ideas and spread good practice across the school.

You have also given the coordinator for special educational needs (SENCo) enhanced responsibility and training. She has accurately identified that pupils who have special educational needs (SEN) and/or disabilities make less progress from their starting points than other pupils, especially in writing. She is in the early stages of developing a system which will enable teachers to measure progress for these pupils more precisely, in order to pin-point the next steps in their learning. It is too soon to evaluate the impact of this on these pupils' learning and progress.

Pupils and parents alike speak very warmly about the school. Pupils told me that school is 'fabulous fun' and they described numerous aspects of their learning which inspire them to do their best work. Memorable topics include learning about the Great Fire of London and 'pirates'. Science and mathematics were also popular subjects. The vast majority of parents who completed the online survey are strongly supportive of the school, for example praising the 'good communication and fun activities'. One parent summed it up aptly with the comment 'dedicated teachers, good leadership, happy children!'

The well-maintained and attractive outdoor spaces are a particular feature of the school. Pupils' physical, social and emotional development are very well promoted by the wide range of activities available for them to enjoy, such as the play trail, tyre park and the particularly impressive willow shelter.

Safeguarding is effective.

Your recruitment checks on staff and volunteers meet statutory requirements. You have ensured that all safeguarding arrangements are fit for purpose and carefully documented. Records show that on the rare occasion when a concern is raised, prompt actions are taken, including the involvement of other agencies if required.

Pupils, staff and parents state very clearly that the school is safe. Pupils could explain why they feel safe at the school; they also told me that they receive regular teaching about bullying and what to do if it happens to them or to a friend. They stressed, however, that the school is a happy and trouble-free place.

All of the staff with whom I spoke said that they receive regular safeguarding training. Staff feel well-supported by leaders if they have any welfare concerns about a pupil and understand clearly how to report any issues.

Members of the governing body are knowledgeable about safeguarding and take their statutory duties seriously.

Inspection findings

- During the inspection, we considered together the impact of your work to improve the teaching of phonics. You had accurately highlighted this as an area of focus, because the proportion of pupils who achieve the expected standard in the phonics screening check at the end of Year 1 was typically below the national average. As a result of revised training for staff, standards improved in 2017 to be in line with the national figure. Your latest assessments show that this improvement has been sustained for a further year.
- The leadership and management of the school are strong. This includes governance. The deputy headteacher provides effective leadership of the infant school while you attend to your duties at the junior school. Together, you form a united and successful senior leadership team.
- Governors are effective in their roles. They are actively involved, alongside you, in setting the priorities for school improvement and in their current work to refresh the school's vision and statement of values. In this, they are keen to gather the views of parents, as well as staff and pupils, in order to ensure that the views of all stakeholders are represented.
- The quality of teaching, learning and assessment in the early years has been strengthened, following the appointment of a new early years leader in September 2017. A revised approach to the curriculum, and the quality of activities provided for pupils, is highly effective. As a result, children are enthusiastic, motivated and increasingly independent learners.

Next steps for the school

Leaders and those responsible for governance should ensure that:

- they improve the accuracy of pupils' spelling and the quality of their handwriting
- they accelerate pupils' rates of progress in Year 1, especially in writing
- they implement a system for precisely measuring the progress of pupils who have SEN and/or disabilities, in order to more sharply identify the next steps in their learning.

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

Yours sincerely

Christine Watkins
Her Majesty's Inspector

Information about the inspection

During this inspection, I held a series of meetings with you and the deputy headteacher. I met with the chair of the governing body and a small group of governors. I held a telephone conversation with a representative of the local authority. I conducted a tour of the school with you and the deputy headteacher to look at pupils' learning and I spoke with a range of teaching and support staff. I spoke with pupils during a group discussion and informally during lessons. I examined pupils' work in their books and listened to them read. I considered 55 responses to Ofsted's online survey, Parent View. I examined a wide range of documents, including those relating to safeguarding, the school's analysis of pupils' current and past achievement, leaders' monitoring records, external reports about the school, minutes of meetings of the governing body, the school's self-evaluation summary and its plans for improvement.