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Mr Kevin Bryant
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Dear Mr Bryant

Short inspection of Somerset Bridge Primary School

Following my visit to the school on 17 July 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. Staff share your high expectations and vision for pupils' success. Governors have an accurate understanding of the school's strengths and weaknesses. They know their responsibilities well and provide robust support and challenge. Leaders show passion and a commitment to continuing to improve the quality of teaching and pupils' welfare. You have ensured that high-quality training enables middle leaders to carry out their responsibilities effectively.

You and other leaders are working effectively to continue to improve pupils' achievement. For example, pupils in key stage 2 are making strong progress in mathematics. The school compares well in national tests and is above the national average in reading, writing and mathematics. Furthermore, improvements in the early years foundation stage mean that children in the Nursery and Reception are well prepared for the next stage in their education.

Leaders promote a cohesive and supportive community. Pupils feel safe and well cared for. Pupils I spoke to told me that they feel 'well-educated' and thoroughly enjoy the range of activities offered, including beyond the school day. They enjoy the opportunities to take on additional responsibilities, such as being school ambassadors and leading lessons about staying safe online. Furthermore, pupils enjoy challenges in their mathematics lessons and express great enthusiasm for learning. Most parents are happy with the quality of education that the school provides. They comment that, 'the school has good values and is led well'.

At the previous inspection, you were asked to improve the quality of pupils' writing. This formed the focus for a line of enquiry during the inspection and is reported under 'Inspection findings'.

Safeguarding is effective.

Safeguarding arrangements are fit for purpose. Vetting checks for staff and volunteers are in place and checked by governors. You ensure that adults are regularly trained and updated so that they can identify pupils at risk. Staff are vigilant and report any concerns promptly, including to external agencies. This work ensures that pupils receive swift and appropriate support. However, there are a few instances where weak record-keeping does not ensure access to a clear chronology of how concerns have been followed up and reviewed.

You have deployed members of staff to support families who face challenging circumstances or backgrounds. This team meets regularly to plan for those who need support. Staff provide high-quality intervention and targeted support for pupils who have particular social, emotional and behavioural needs so that they can engage and achieve.

Pupils recognise the many ways in which adults keep them safe. For example, staff teach pupils how to stay safe on roads and on the internet. They told me that 'pupils' voices are always heard,' and some pupils work with adults to help prevent poor behaviour and discrimination. They also told me that instances of bullying are rare and dealt with by adults quickly.

Inspection findings

- Firstly, we considered how well pupils, including those who are disadvantaged, in the early years classes and in key stage 2 are achieving in writing. In recent years, their progress in writing has not been as strong as their progress in other areas of the curriculum.
- In the early years, children use their reading and understanding of well-known stories to help widen their vocabulary. Children speak confidently and are proud to be known as a 'super sentence writer'. Teaching of phonics is improving in the Nursery and Reception classes. Teachers also provide opportunities for children to practise their writing skills when children select their own activities. Consequently, the proportion of children meeting the age-appropriate expectations in reading and writing by the end of Reception are above the national average. However, a number of pupils, including some who are disadvantaged, are not yet forming letters clearly or accurately enough, which hampers their progress.
- In key stage 2, you have worked with the English subject leader to introduce and refine procedures to help pupils write more fluently and creatively. Pupils use high-quality texts to help them plan extended pieces of writing. You have ensured that pupils use grammar with increasing accuracy so they write with greater clarity. Teachers provide clear guidance and next steps for pupils to edit

their own work and improve their spelling and punctuation. You have also made sure that pupils apply their skills when writing in other subjects. For example, pupils write diaries from a Victorian factory, persuasive speeches and biographies of famous leaders. Workbooks show that pupils use punctuation and spelling accurately and are increasingly confident in adapting their style of writing. As a result, standards pupils reach by the end of Year 6 have risen and the difference between the standards achieved by disadvantaged pupils and other pupils nationally is diminishing.

- Next, we evaluated the progress of lower-ability and disadvantaged pupils in phonics and reading in key stage 1. The proportion of disadvantaged pupils reaching the expected standard in the phonics screening check in Year 1 and in reading at the end of Year 2 has been below the national average in recent years. Very recent assessment information shows that the actions you and other leaders have taken are now diminishing the difference between disadvantaged pupils and other pupils nationally. Lower-ability pupils enjoy reading aloud and discussing the characters and themes in their reading books. Their comprehension is sometimes hindered by their limited ability to tackle unfamiliar words and to accurately blend the sounds that groups of letters make. This insecure knowledge means that some pupils misread commonly spelled words, for example reading 'feast' as 'fight'.
- We considered the progress made by pupils who have special educational needs (SEN) and/or disabilities. The progress that this small group has made has been slower than expected in recent years. You have worked with the special educational needs coordinator (SENCo) to identify the needs of pupils more accurately and provide support for their social and emotional development as well as their learning needs. More effective identification in the early years means that children now receive strong pastoral support which helps them to learn more readily. Furthermore, staff have received specialist training to help them to provide better support for pupils with more complex needs.
- However, some pupils who have SEN and/or disabilities do not make enough progress in their learning. Teachers do not consistently use well matched or precise targets to help pupils make strong progress. Leaders and teachers do not consistently monitor the teaching of pupils who have SEN and/or disabilities well enough or intervene quickly when pupils need to make better progress.
- Finally, we considered attendance. We explored the impact of your actions to improve attendance and reduce persistent absence for disadvantaged pupils and those who have SEN and/or disabilities. This was due to an increase in persistent absence for these groups in 2017 and a decline in rates of attendance overall in recent years. You have taken effective action to reduce rates of persistent absence. You have reduced the number of absences due to fixed-term exclusions by providing additional support for pupils who need help to meet your expectations of their behaviour. You monitor attendance closely and provide additional support to families to help pupils achieve regular attendance. These improvements mean that attendance is now improving and is close to the national average. The number of pupils who miss school regularly has decreased. You recognise the need to maintain the pace of this improvement so that attendance continues to rise.

Next steps for the school

Leaders and those responsible for governance should ensure that:

- pupils in the early years form letters more accurately and consistently
- leaders monitor the precision of targets set for pupils who have SEN and/or disabilities and regularly evaluate pupils' progress towards these targets
- the teaching of phonics improves so that pupils of lower ability in key stage 1, including disadvantaged pupils, can tackle unfamiliar words with confidence
- record-keeping clearly outlines the actions taken to follow up and review concerns.

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

Yours sincerely

Claire Mirams
Ofsted Inspector

Information about the inspection

During the inspection, I held meetings with you and the leaders responsible for SEN, safeguarding, English and mathematics. We reviewed information on current pupils' progress and your own evaluations of the school's performance. I conducted lesson observations with you and with the SENCo. I also met with members of the governing body and scrutinised records of governing body meetings and visits. I met with a group of pupils and discussed their viewpoints on the curriculum, behaviour, bullying and keeping safe. I scrutinised various safeguarding records and current information about school attendance. I heard a group of pupils read and scrutinised pupils' workbooks.

I also considered 14 responses to the pupil survey, 21 responses to the staff survey and 64 parent responses to the online survey, Parent View.