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Miss Emma Lindsay
Headteacher
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Bishopstone
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Dear Miss Lindsay

Short inspection of Bishopstone Church of England Primary School

Following my visit to the school on 2 October 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 March 2015.

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.**

You are clear about the school's strengths and its areas for improvement. For example, you know that, over time, not enough pupils have met the expected standard in the phonics check at the end of Year 1 and Year 2. You also know that pupils' achievement in mathematics is not good enough. Your time in post has helped you to develop the resilience and tenacity to acknowledge weaknesses and confront them. Consequently, you and the staff team, supported by governors, are working together closely to implement various improvements. These will be explored further in the section of this letter setting out the inspection findings.

The school is facing some challenges currently, resulting from the departure of a long-standing member of staff. This change has had a disproportionately large impact because of the small size of the school. Consequently, you are now teaching full time, in addition to your headship responsibilities, until governors make a new appointment for January. This decision has been made in the best interest of the pupils and in recognition of the extra pressure it places on you. However, you are well supported by staff, who have rallied round and are committed to making the arrangement succeed. Staff work well together, which has ensured greater stability and flexibility to accommodate changes. All members of staff who responded to the survey issued during the inspection agreed that they are proud to work at the school. One member of staff commented, 'The headteacher supports staff

extremely well.'

The newly formed governing body is beginning to provide an increasing level of challenge with which to hold you to account. However, historically, leaders and governors have failed to reverse the decline in pupils' achievement in mathematics by the time they leave the school. For too long, pupils have made insufficient progress, and leaders and governors did not identify the issue quickly enough. You acknowledge that the monitoring of teaching within school did not pick up this issue early enough.

The local authority has been instrumental in drawing attention to these weaknesses and providing an objective and honest view. This has helped the school to move forward.

Since the previous inspection, you and staff have maintained certain key areas of the school's work. The school continues to be an integral part of the community, and pupils participate in many activities in the village and with the church. Staff know each individual child very well. Pupils are very well cared for because you apply in practice the values that underpin the school's nurturing ethos. This is why pupils feel that they belong at the school and grow in confidence. Furthermore, the achievement of older pupils in reading and writing has been strengthened over the last couple of years. The most recent provisional information indicates that pupils who left the school in 2018 made good progress in both of these subjects.

At the beginning of the inspection, we agreed on the key lines of enquiry to be considered during the day. We considered the effectiveness of leaders' actions to improve the teaching of phonics and early reading. These also included establishing the effectiveness of safeguarding and leaders' actions to raise the achievement of pupils in mathematics. These lines of enquiry are considered below under 'Safeguarding' and 'Inspection Findings', where they have not already been referred to.

Safeguarding is effective.

Safeguarding is effective. As the designated safeguarding lead, you have a firm grasp of procedures and policy. You know the needs of the potentially vulnerable pupils in the school and ensure that their needs are met. As a small group of staff, you meet regularly and often to discuss matters and share concerns when necessary. Records for monitoring pupils causing concern contain all the necessary information. This information is organised chronologically and records the actions taken by staff. You receive the support that you require from external agencies to ensure that pupils are safe.

Checks to ensure that staff are suitable to work with pupils are up to date, complete and thorough. Staff and governors who appoint new staff to the school have also had training to ensure that they select suitably qualified employees.

Pupils who spoke with me reported that they feel safe in school. They also said that

bullying is not an issue and staff are quick to respond should pupils be worried or unhappy. These views are supported by nearly all the pupils who responded to the pupil survey issued during the inspection. One pupil who spoke with me said, 'We're a close school.' All of the parents who responded to the Parent View online survey agreed that their child is safe in school.

Absence and exclusions are well below average, overall, and for different groups of pupils. Incidents of poor behaviour are also very low.

Inspection findings

- At the previous inspection, you were asked to raise pupils' achievement in mathematics so that it matched achievement in reading and writing. However, outcomes in mathematics over the last few years have remained stubbornly low.
- Leaders have introduced a new approach to the teaching of mathematics. This is helping to ensure that pupils of different abilities are set work that is better matched to their needs and the demands of the revised national curriculum. Pupils are engaging with this new way of working because they find it interesting and are taking greater pride in the presentation of their work. However, you acknowledge that, because it was only introduced at the beginning of this academic year, it is too soon to judge its impact.
- Pupils across the ability range are not stretched sufficiently to deepen their mathematical thinking. Although work in mathematics is more effectively matched to their abilities than it was, pupils, including the most able, are not pushed to achieve the higher standards. Pupils who spoke with me said that they found work too often easy and rarely challenging.
- In 2018, a higher proportion of pupils achieved the expected standard in the Year 1 phonics check than in previous years and this was above the national average. The teacher has strong knowledge of the phonics scheme being used. She applies the scheme systematically and is well supported by the teaching assistant. Children in Reception Year and pupils in Year 1 are taught the sound and letter correspondences that are appropriate to their age.
- Nevertheless, leaders and staff do not have the highest expectations to improve progress of the weakest readers and to ensure that they catch up with their peers. In addition, staff do not consistently ensure that the books that pupils read are matched precisely to their phonics abilities. This hinders their progress to an extent.

Next steps for the school

Leaders and those responsible for governance should ensure that:

- The quality of leadership improves and leads to higher achievement in mathematics as a result of:
 - close monitoring of the effectiveness of actions to strengthen the teaching of mathematics

- governors continuing to increase the rigour with which they hold the headteacher to account, using different sources of information.
- The quality of teaching improves as a result of:
 - pupils, including the most able, being challenged further in mathematics so that they make the progress of which they are capable
 - readers in the lower years being provided with books that closely match their phonics knowledge and enable them to make greater progress
 - leaders and staff having the highest expectations to improve the progress of the weakest readers.

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

Yours sincerely

Steve Smith
Her Majesty's Inspector

Information about the inspection

During this inspection, I spoke to you and staff responsible for the teaching of reading and phonics. I also spoke to representatives of the governing body and pupils. I spoke on the telephone with a representative of the local authority.

You and I visited lessons to observe pupils' attitudes to learning. We also scrutinised the work in pupils' books and I listened to pupils read.

A range of documentary evidence was considered, which included the school's improvement plan and information relating to pupils' achievement and attendance. Additionally, I scrutinised various safeguarding records, including those relating to the suitability of staff to work with children.

I took account of the seven responses to the Parent View online survey. In addition, I took account of the seven responses to the staff survey and the 16 responses to the pupil survey issued during the inspection.