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Ms Beck Barber-Stubbs
Executive Principal
Burbage Primary School
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Dear Ms Barber-Stubbs

Short inspection of Burbage Primary School

Following my visit to the school on 10 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 have taken up your post as executive principal of the school relatively recently. Over time, there has been disruption in leadership that has slowed the development of the school's effectiveness, particularly in aspects of the quality of teaching. Staff and most parents and carers recognise and value the impetus you have brought to the school's improvement since your appointment. A parent typically expressed this as 'There has been an improvement in all aspects of the school since Ms Barber-Stubbs came to Burbage.' However, results from the parent questionnaire for this inspection showed that a small number of parents have concerns that the instability of leadership and teaching has hampered their children's progress.

Since taking up your appointment, you have accurately identified the school's improvement priorities. You have brought a sense of urgency to the development of teaching in order to improve pupils' progress. For example, you have given teachers clear guidance about supporting learning through good questioning and feedback to pupils. You check to ensure that changes in practice are improving learning.

The school is part of Excalibur Multi-Academy Trust. The trust has worked with leaders and supported the school. In particular, support has strengthened the provision for pupils who have special educational needs and/or disabilities. You have

worked closely with trust leaders and, together, you have built a programme of support to hasten improvement. Governors have supported and challenged leaders well throughout this period of change.

At the time of the last inspection, leaders were asked to improve teaching by ensuring that it was sufficiently challenging for all pupils. The school was also asked to improve the effectiveness of middle leaders. Recent fluctuations in staffing mean that stability in middle leadership has been challenging to maintain. This instability in leadership over time has constrained your work to develop the teaching of writing in particular. You have identified the need to develop your leadership team to ensure that the quality of teaching continues to improve.

Pupils behave well and, when teachers demonstrate consistently high expectations, pupils work hard. Year 6 pupils say they are enjoying their new challenges. Over time, pupils have had good opportunities to learn in history, French and science. Similarly, there are many examples of high-quality artwork around the school.

Safeguarding is effective.

There is a strong culture of safeguarding in the school. This has been established through good training and by the strong commitment of leaders and governors. School policies and procedures are effective. Vulnerable pupils are well protected because staff are vigilant and leaders are confident in reporting any concerns to agencies that support pupils' safety. Leaders are aware of the wide range of risks to which pupils can be exposed, including being vulnerable to extremist views. They have taken prompt action when concerns have been raised. Leaders make effective checks on all adults who work with pupils and records are kept in an exemplary manner.

Pupils feel safe and say that other pupils are friendly. They are aware that the behaviour of a few pupils dipped last year but are now confident that teachers manage behaviour well. Pupils respond well to the school's teaching of how to stay safe on the internet. Parents feel that their children are safe in school. A parent typically described the school as 'a safe and happy environment'.

Inspection findings

- I firstly looked at the progress pupils are making in writing, particularly boys and the pupils who have the potential to reach the higher standard for their age. Recent national assessments showed that pupils' attainment in writing was broadly in line with national averages at both key stages 1 and 2. The progress pupils made across key stage 2 in writing was lower than that made in reading and mathematics. I observed pupils writing in class and looked at pupils' work over the term. This showed that there is variability in how much teachers support and challenge pupils' handwriting. Pupils do not develop their handwriting securely at the start of their time in school. This then remains a weakness that, for boys in particular, makes writing a more difficult and laborious process. Even though boys have good ideas, too often they are unable to write them down

fluently. This limits their ability to write at the standard expected or exceeding that usually found for their age.

- In key stage 2, there is an emphasis on the teaching of grammar and, generally, pupils' punctuation and spelling are of a good standard. However, pupils have few opportunities to apply these skills in ways which allow them to express their ideas or develop their vocabulary and sentence structure. This limits their progress. Where pupils have these opportunities, for example when writing in lessons other than English, their writing shows the potential to reach the expected or higher standard for their age. This was evident in Year 4 as pupils wrote applications to join the Roman army. It was also seen in Year 6, where pupils described life in Ancient Egypt after travelling through time. Overall, there is insufficient writing of this type to support teachers in assessing what aspects of pupils' writing need to be improved. Pupils are given time to correct their work, for example their spelling, but guidance for pupils on improving the structure and content of their writing is less well developed. This limits pupils' opportunity to reach the higher standard.
- I next reviewed the progress pupils make across key stage 1. Standards reached in recent national assessments do not show consistently strong progress for all pupils from their starting points at the end of Reception. However, the proportion of pupils reaching the expected standard in the phonics screening check at the end of Year 1 was above the national level. Pupils use their knowledge of sounds well in order to write. They use a range of key words accurately in their writing and spell unfamiliar words by using the sounds they know.
- Pupils' workbooks show they are making progress in mathematics. Leaders' work has raised teachers' expectations of what pupils can achieve. Most current pupils are now challenged effectively in mathematics lessons and are given regular opportunities to solve problems and describe their mathematical reasoning. However, teachers do not consistently make sharp use of their assessment of what pupils already know and can do to plan for the next stage of learning. Consequently, some tasks lack challenge. Equally, teachers do not have high enough expectations that pupils present their work neatly and carefully. This hinders pupils' progress.
- My third line of enquiry was to review the way teachers in the Reception class use their first assessments of children's skills to promote children's best progress. While the proportion of children reaching a good level of development has generally been in line with the national level, the proportion of children exceeding the early learning goals has been low.
- Teachers assess children's skills and knowledge accurately when children join the school and liaise well with local early years settings. The school has recently taken on the leadership of the pre-school in order to strengthen children's progress across the early years. Most children begin school with skills typical for their age. However, some have weaker reading and writing skills at the start of the Reception year. The knowledge of reading and writing is delayed.
- Current planning shows that staff are building upon children's starting points in reading, including providing good challenge for the most able children. The teacher works closely with others within the trust to share practice and ensure

that children's reading develops consistently well. However, the school's policy for developing children's early writing is unclear. Staff in the Reception class are therefore less confident about the progression in skills. Children were seen enjoying the story of the 'Queen's Knickers' and attempting to copy adults' writing to put captions to their pictures. However, they were not being guided to develop good habits of accurate letter formation. This limits their progress in developing the confidence and skills to write in order to express their ideas.

Next steps for the school

Leaders and those responsible for governance should ensure that:

- inconsistencies in the teaching of writing are eradicated so that all pupils, including the children in the early years, make good progress and achieve well
- teaching in key stage 1 is sufficiently challenging so that a higher proportion of pupils reach and exceed the standards expected for their age
- the support plan from the trust to develop teaching and middle leadership is implemented swiftly and effectively.

I am copying this letter to the chair of the governing body and the chief executive officer of the multi-academy trust, the regional schools commissioner and the director of children's services for Wiltshire. This letter will be published on the Ofsted website.

Yours sincerely

Wendy Marriott
Ofsted Inspector

Information about the inspection

I visited all classes with you to observe learning and reviewed pupils' work in a sample of English, mathematics and topic books. Together, we visited the pre-school. I met with a teacher to discuss assessment and planning. I met with you to discuss your plans for improvement. I met with the chief executive and two other officers of the trust to consider the support to the school. I met with the chair of governors and one parent governor. I reviewed a range of documentation related to safeguarding and spoke to staff about their training. I spoke to a group of Year 6 pupils to seek their views of the school. In addition, I met with a group of eight pupils from Year 2 upwards and spoke to other pupils at lunchtime. I spoke informally with parents at the start of the school day. I took account of an email from a parent and the 33 responses and 30 written comments recorded on Parent View. I also considered the views of 11 staff expressed in their questionnaire.