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Anne Radford  
Executive Headteacher  
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Dear Anne Radford

### **Short inspection of Bonners CofE School**

Following my visit to the school on 16 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 October 2014.

#### **This school continues to be good.**

The leadership team has maintained the good quality of education in the school since the last inspection. With your head of school and governors, you make a well organised and active leadership team that wants all pupils to achieve well and enjoy their learning through an interesting and stimulating curriculum. You are honest and realistic about your school's strengths and areas for development. Your focus on developing writing throughout the school has resulted in a culture of quality writing and high achievement by pupils throughout the school. You recognise that pupils are not achieving as well in reading and mathematics, particularly those who are of lower and middle ability.

You support your staff well and they are all proud to work at the school. You have developed your subject leaders, making good use of the opportunities to share expertise in teaching and learning across the two schools in your federation. Leaders have also worked with teachers in other schools as part of your programme of encouraging leaders' participation in research projects. These initiatives have led to improvements such as the more effective teaching of phonics in your school.

The school is a happy place. Pupils enjoy their responsibilities and take pride in helping set up assemblies and being librarians. They particularly enjoy being 'buddies' to children in Reception and playing with them on the playground. They say that it is easy to make friends at school. Clubs are popular with those who attend. Most parents are very supportive of the school. Several parents agreed when one parent said, 'My child runs into school and is happy to be here'. Parents

are pleased with the progress that their children make, and they appreciate the caring way that staff settle children into the school in Reception. Parents value the way that the school fosters a sense of community for all and know that staff will take time to support them as well as their children.

At the previous inspection you were asked to ensure that teachers gave pupils regular advice about how they can improve their work, and make sure that pupils were given the time to consider and act on teachers' advice. You were also asked to increase the opportunities for teachers to learn from existing outstanding teachers in the school. Pupils now receive regular, quality feedback from teachers. They talk about what they need to do to improve in Reception, and use the clear guidance given to them by teachers to edit and improve their work themselves from Year 1 to Year 6. This approach has been particularly effective in improving writing throughout the school. Leaders have made very effective use of teaching expertise, both in the school and across the federation, giving teachers opportunities to learn from each other and improve standards in both schools.

Attendance overall is above the national average. Although persistent absence remains high, it has improved significantly and a third more pupils now attend school regularly than did last year. Leaders meticulously track absence, talk to parents when a pupil's attendance falls below 95% and reward pupils in assembly for good attendance.

### **Safeguarding is effective.**

You have made sure that systems for safeguarding are very thorough. Your office manager conscientiously keeps your documentation. Your safeguarding governor makes frequent regular checks on all aspects of safeguarding, and spot checks staff to ensure that they know how to report concerns. Training in all aspects of safeguarding is up to date. Your referrals to other agencies such as social services are timely and well documented. You have a commendable system for the transition of vulnerable pupils to secondary school. Risk assessments are in place for all school activities, and there is well-documented evidence that leaders act swiftly when safety issues or accidents occur, quickly rectifying matters so that the same thing cannot happen again.

Pupils feel safe. Your staff teach online safety as part of the personal, social and health education curriculum. Pupils are very aware of how to keep themselves safe online. Several pupils told me how to use the dolphin symbol on the school computers to summon a teacher quickly to report anything that made them feel uncomfortable. There is a range of advice and links for parents on the school website; training for parents on e-safety has been provided in the past.

A few parents felt that the school does not deal well with bullying. However, pupils with whom I spoke felt confident that there is always an adult to talk to about any problems and the adult will help resolve their problem. Leaders keep clear records of any incidents that occur and follow up issues to ensure a resolution.

## Inspection findings

- The inspection focused on safeguarding arrangements for the school; how well the areas for improvement from the last inspection had been tackled; the effectiveness of the support for disadvantaged pupils and pupils who have special educational needs (SEN) and/or disabilities; the effectiveness of leaders in raising standards in reading and mathematics, and how well the curriculum contributes to the pupils' learning experience.
- The skilled and knowledgeable special educational needs coordinator ensures that disadvantaged pupils and those who have SEN and/or disabilities are at the forefront of teachers' thinking. She has introduced a system where she provides information about pupils' learning and social needs to all staff. This has resulted in a well-matched, wide range of interventions to support pupils' learning and well-being. Parents appreciate the support that staff have provided for their children. More than half of the disadvantaged pupils in the school make good progress, at least in line with all other pupils. Progress has improved, particularly in reading, in the past year. The very small number of pupils who have SEN and/or disabilities are also making progress from their starting points, although at a slower rate than other pupils.
- When reading, pupils use their phonic skills to decode words. However, leaders have rightly noticed that fluency in reading is not as good as it could be for the lower- and middle-attaining readers. They have put a successful intervention programme in place for key stage 2. Training for staff over the last two years has focused on improving the teaching and learning of phonics. This has resulted in fewer pupils needing this programme this year than in the past.
- Reading is improving. A newly introduced initiative in which pupils choose from '100 good books' is having a positive impact on the quality, interest and frequency of pupils' reading in upper key stage 2. However, the approach is not yet fully developed across the school. Pupils in key stage 1 and lower key stage 2 are not consistently being directed towards the best '100 good books' by staff, nor are they choosing books for themselves, particularly pupils who are lower- and middle-ability readers.
- Staff have welcomed training and changes in the way they teach mathematics. Teaching assistants have been trained alongside teachers, and they contribute positively to pupils' learning. Despite the challenges of being taught in mixed-age classes the mathematics taught is age-appropriate. Pupils work hard in lessons and concentrate well. Many enjoy mathematics. However, a few pupils said that they repeated some work and when this happened they found the work easy. Work in pupils' books showed an appropriate level of challenge for the most able. Teachers maintain very high expectations of the most able pupils in Year 6, encouraging them to enjoy their mathematics and rise to the challenge.
- Pupils have embraced the school's work on learning attitudes and 'growth mindset'. One pupil said about his mathematics, 'I am confident if I double check I can't get it wrong.'
- Leadership have focused on developing reasoning in mathematics and there is growing evidence of this approach in the pupils' books. However, lower- and

middle-ability pupils do not always finish their work in the lesson.

- The curriculum helps pupils learn. Pupils greatly enjoy the interesting topics that encompass all subject areas. Pupils see themselves as learning 'things that no one is good at yet' but are confident that they will have gained a wide range of new knowledge and skills by the end of their topic. Beautifully presented learning journey books illustrate the breadth of their learning. The outcome of every topic is shared with parents, and pupils are proud to present their work. One parent said, 'Teachers bring learning to life, it is all about the imagination.'

### **Next steps for the school**

Leaders and those responsible for governance should ensure that:

- teachers assist pupils in choosing a book to read, particularly lower- and middle-ability readers, thereby ensuring that pupils access high-quality, challenging texts while reading for pleasure
- teachers give lower- and middle-ability pupils the opportunity to reason and explain their learning in mathematics, so that they have access to the same learning activities as the most able.

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

Yours sincerely

Lesley Corbett  
**Ofsted Inspector**

### **Information about the inspection**

I met with you, your head of school, subject leaders and the special educational needs coordinator. I also met with the office manager, two governors, some parents and a group of pupils. I heard six pupils in key stage 1 read and observed teaching and looked at pupils' books in every class in the school. I had a telephone conversation with a representative of the local authority. I also considered 22 responses to Ofsted's online questionnaire, Parent View. I analysed a range of documents, including leaders' self-evaluation, the school development plan, minutes of the governing body meetings, safeguarding checks, policies and procedures.