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Mr Mark Szortowski
Headteacher
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Dear Mr Szortowski

Short inspection of Beckley Church of England Primary School

Following my visit to the school on 6 November 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.

This school continues to be good.

The leadership team has maintained the good quality of education in the school since the last inspection. After you joined the school as headteacher two years ago, you initiated some far-reaching and effective changes. You restructured the workforce, strengthened safeguarding, developed opportunities for learning in the early years outdoor play area, and improved the teaching of phonics. These changes have led to improvements. Staff, pupils, and most parents and carers praise the quality of education the school provides. You have rightly identified that there is more work to be done in some key areas, for example refining the approaches to the way you track pupils' progress. You and the governors have sought to strengthen these and other aspects of the school by joining a multi-academy trust.

Pupils are nurtured and cared for well. Most are keen to succeed and contribute well in class. Across your school there is an industrious yet joyful atmosphere. Pupils relish the additional opportunities provided, such as trips to the local bird preservation area and the Second World War victory street party. A number of parents remarked on Ofsted's free-text facility that the school supports and nurtures pupils. One parent commented that the school's leaders 'have created a kind, nurturing and rich learning environment for all of the children'.

You have improved the areas identified in the previous inspection report. You have introduced a new policy for providing feedback to pupils on their work, which teachers consistently use. The teaching of early reading is particularly strong. This is because it is carefully organised, thoughtfully monitored, and teachers have high

expectations of pupils' and children's levels of concentration. Children make a good start and gain the knowledge and skills in the early years that they need to cope with the demands of Year 1. Pupils generally attain highly at the school. They benefit from having the chance to complete challenging tasks. A greater than average proportion of pupils achieve the expected standard and above in national tests and assessments in reading and in mathematics. However, some aspects of assessment are not fully developed. For instance, teachers do not have a clear enough view of how well the tasks they set enable pupils to acquire and apply subject-specific knowledge and skills.

Governance is impressive. Governors have provided you with guidance and support in making necessary changes. Governors bring their educational expertise to bear in the way they carry out their roles, both through the questions they ask and the sharpness of their ability to identify appropriate priorities for improvement. They have precisely and astutely identified the school's strengths, and the weaker areas, and set their expectations for pupils' progress suitably high.

Safeguarding is effective.

Safeguarding is a real strength because of the personal investment you have placed in improving safeguarding since you joined the school. Of note is the work you have done to shore up the site and the perimeters, so that pupils can enjoy the school's beautiful surroundings and keep safe. You are strongly committed to ensuring that pupils are as safe as is possible, and to this end you requested a safeguarding audit from the local authority.

Safeguarding procedures and processes are fit for purpose and carefully monitored by you and the other designated leaders. You are highly vigilant and carefully review every concern that is raised, referring concerns appropriately to the local authority. You make a valuable contribution to the decisions made by the local authority as regards the assistance they provide for the pupils you refer. This is because you have in-depth knowledge of each pupil's situation.

Inspection findings

- We agreed to focus on the accuracy of leaders', including governors', views of the school's strengths and weaknesses. Governors' views of the school are incisive because they understand published performance information very well and use it to hold school leaders to account. Governors have identified that neither they, nor school leaders, have a sharp enough picture of variations in the progress of pupils currently in school. They have prioritised improving tracking and you are now in the early stages of adopting a different approach.
- We also looked at how sustainable the improvements are. The changes you have made have created both stability for the school as it moves forward and a sense of well-being. For example, you have been mindful of reducing workload when implementing new approaches. Staff made positive comments on the questionnaire about the way that changes were mindful of their workload.
- We reviewed improvements in teaching to see if they are having a positive

impact on pupils' learning. Broadly speaking, teaching across the school is strong, and pupils know what they need to do to succeed in the tasks teachers set. Pupils commented on how much they enjoyed using counting and other types of equipment in mathematics. They also told me that some of the new approaches to teaching reading that you have introduced in key stage 2 are helping them to think more deeply.

- We explored the ways that you have developed assessment and the curriculum. Teachers use some aspects of assessment effectively. For example, they ask pupils carefully crafted questions and use these to decide who needs extra help. However, teachers do not always check that the tasks they set in writing, and in the wider curriculum, enable pupils to apply their subject-specific knowledge and skills at a deep level.
- You provide well-planned opportunities for pupils to work with younger children. Year 4 pupils read with Reception children and talk with them about the stories they share. This helps Reception-class children to become familiar with the way stories are structured, as well as introducing them to new vocabulary. Strengths in the teaching of early reading have led to a steady increase in the proportion of Year 1 pupils reaching the expected standard in the phonics screening check. In 2018, 100% of pupils reached the expected standard.
- We reviewed safeguarding procedures and the safeguarding culture in school. You have systematically improved this aspect of the school and wisely sought external verification for the changes you have made. You have fully implemented the recommendations from the safeguarding audit conducted by the local authority. You have helpfully collated information about the safeguarding training staff have received, and the training they require. This has made it easier for you to identify gaps in training. You have also introduced changes that assist you in making pre-employment checks, including checks made on volunteers.

Next steps for the school

Leaders and those responsible for governance should ensure that:

- approaches to tracking that are under development provide leaders and teachers with a sharp understanding of pupils' progress
- teachers check that the tasks they set enable pupils to apply subject-specific skills and knowledge at a deep level.

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

Yours sincerely

Sarah Hubbard
Her Majesty's Inspector

Information about the inspection

During the inspection, I checked safeguarding arrangements, including the records of recruitment checks, policies and procedures. I reviewed a range of information, which included the school's self-evaluation and improvement plans, external audits, and information about pupils' progress. Accompanied by you, I observed learning in mathematics, writing, reading and the wider curriculum, and made short visits to all classes at least once. I also met with a group of subject leaders. A separate meeting was held with designated safeguarding leaders, which included the headteacher. A meeting was held with the representative from the diocese, who has been supporting you and other leaders, and separately with the chair of the governing body, accompanied by one other governor, who is the chair of the teaching and learning committee.

I undertook a scrutiny of pupils' work, accompanied by senior leaders, and also met with a small group of pupils. I reviewed the 39 responses to Ofsted's online parent questionnaire, Parent View, including 24 free-text comments. I also considered the 16 responses to the staff survey.