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Mr David Williams
Executive Interim Headteacher
Bisley Blue Coat Church of England Primary School
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Dear Mr Williams

Short inspection of Bisley Blue Coat Church of England Primary School

Following my visit to the school on 27 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 February 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.**

National assessments show that standards have fluctuated across the school in recent years and have not kept up with the raised expectations in the national curriculum. Since your appointment as interim executive headteacher at the beginning of this school year, you have introduced a sense of urgency into school improvement. Your forthright and meticulous approach to help the school become as effective as possible is valued by the whole school community.

New and existing governors and staff have responded promptly to the changes in teaching and leadership you have made based on your accurate evaluation of the school's performance. The governors have extended your appointment for a full academic year. Their care in making other well-considered staff appointments represents a strong commitment to sustaining improvement. You acknowledge that, currently, much of this change has not yet had time to secure the desired improvement in pupils' achievements. Hence the need for your next inspection to be a Section 5 inspection to examine the effectiveness of your actions in raising pupils' progress and attainment.

You and your staff have valued the support given to you by the local authority. This support has been particularly effective in providing training for teachers and

complementing your development of their leadership skills. The drive to sustain improvement is now shared by a motivated leadership team. Well-planned actions are under way and already bringing about improvement to pupils' progress. For example, pupils with special educational needs and/disabilities (SEND) are now supported well through detailed individual support plans. These enable staff to provide activities that help pupils to make the next steps in learning.

The pupils in the school are well behaved and polite. They say they enjoy coming to school, and attendance levels are high. Most parents and carers who responded to the online questionnaire acknowledge and welcome the changes you have put in place since your arrival. Typical comments included, 'The school is addressing previous areas of concern,' and, 'I am confident that the well-being of the children is at the heart of all the decisions that are being made.'

In the previous inspection, inspectors recommended that teachers use assessment information more consistently to help develop pupils' mathematical skills. Past instability in staffing and difficulties in securing consistent assessment procedures weakened efforts to improve pupils' progress. Your work in securing effective assessment procedures is helping to improve pupils' progress. For example, you have introduced bespoke 'rapid catch-up' plans for pupils joining the school at times other than at the normal time. Similarly, your whole-school focus on developing pupils' spelling, punctuation and grammar, as recommended in the previous inspection, is also proving beneficial. You acknowledge there is still work to be done to ensure that these initiatives further improve pupils' outcomes across the school.

Safeguarding is effective.

Staff know pupils well and show concern for their welfare. Staff at all levels use their training well to spot, record and report any concerns that a pupil may be at risk of harm. Leaders keep safeguarding procedures up to date and, along with staff, sustain an effective culture of vigilance in protecting pupils from harm. Governors regularly check the school's procedures for safeguarding. For example, they ensure that all adults working with pupils are trained and suitable to do so.

The very large majority of parents who responded to the online questionnaire agreed that their children feel happy and safe in school. As one family typically expressed, 'We couldn't be happier with the teaching, care and commitment at the school.' Inspection evidence shows that on the rare occasions when parents have raised concerns, the school has addressed them diligently to keep pupils safe. Consequently, pupils say they feel safe and well cared for in school and know how to stay safe, 'including when we use the internet'. Pupils also say that they help each other stay safe by moving sensibly through the school and willingly helping each other learn in class.

Inspection findings

- Over time, the proportion of pupils meeting the expected standard in the phonics screening checks in Years 1 and 2 has remained below average. Consequently,

the first line of enquiry considered how effectively leaders are improving the teaching of phonics and, subsequently, pupils' reading skills and progress.

- On taking up your appointment, you quickly identified the need to improve the teaching of phonics. You have provided additional training for teachers and support assistants. This is improving the quality of teaching and learning, but has not been in place long enough to have full impact.
- School, local authority and inspection checks of phonics sessions show they are well planned to progressively develop pupils' phonics knowledge. They are beginning to develop pupils' skills more effectively. Some staff still lack the experience to model letter sounds to best effect or to correct pupils' misconceptions quickly enough. At times, pupils have difficulty using phonics to tackle new words.
- In order to secure pupils' more consistent progress in reading through the school, teachers are increasingly promoting pupils' interest in reading. They are providing stimulating texts, closely matched to the pupils' knowledge and skills, such as 'Charlie and the Chocolate Factory' in Years 1 and 2. This is helping some pupils who have fallen behind catch up more quickly and others to deepen their understanding. New leaders have noticed that parents are keen to help their children at home and are seeking their support in more strongly promoting pupils' enjoyment and progress in reading.
- The second line of enquiry examined how effectively leaders and teachers help pupils to deepen their mathematical understanding as they move through the school.
- Since your arrival, you and the new subject leader have quickly focused the whole school on deepening pupils' understanding and interest in mathematics. You are enriching staff skills and teaching through school and specialist training. During the inspection, we saw that pupils enjoyed expressing their ideas and showed improving confidence in tackling real-life mathematical problems. For example, pupils in Years 5 and 6 used their understanding of equivalence to solve problems involving fractions.
- Checks of pupils' learning show that some pupils' progress is hampered by insecure understanding of the place value of number. Consequently, alongside the development of pupils' reasoning skills, the mathematics subject leader has strengthened the focus on improving basic numeracy skills. For example, pupils eagerly tackle their early morning work to aid fluency and rapid recall of number facts. You acknowledge the need to sustain this improved teaching and learning to raise standards in mathematics.
- National assessments and the school's own checks have identified that spelling, punctuation and grammar are generally the weaker aspects of pupils' writing. Consequently, the next line of enquiry assessed how well leaders and teachers are developing these skills.
- Teachers in all classes now place a stronger emphasis on developing pupils' spelling and punctuation skills. They are also seeking to improve pupils' writing skills through discrete grammar lessons. Recent school assessments show improvements in pupils' ability to construct accurately punctuated, meaningful

sentences. Pupils in all classes respond well to stimulating texts and topics, such as 'Life in Ancient Rome'. Some are able to write imaginatively and accurately, in line with the expectations for their age. However, handwriting and spelling skills have not improved as consistently. This limits pupils' overall fluency and achievement in writing, although pupils' current written work does reflect their improving standards and progress.

Next steps for the school

Leaders and those responsible for governance should ensure that teachers continue to use strengthened assessment procedures and improve pupils' progress by:

- sustaining the improved teaching of phonics and reading so that all pupils develop the skills needed to help them become enthusiastic and effective readers
- maintaining the drive to fully secure pupils' understanding of the place value of number and deepen their reasoning skills in order to improve standards in mathematics across the school
- teachers ensuring that pupils develop better handwriting and spelling skills.

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

Yours sincerely

Alexander Baxter
Ofsted Inspector

Information about the inspection

During the inspection, I held meetings with you and other staff who have leadership responsibilities. I met with the chair and three other members of the school's governing body and also met with a representative from the local authority. I visited classrooms with you and we collected and scrutinised samples of pupils' work in books. I talked with individual pupils during visits to classrooms and observed them reading and checking their work. I listened to selected pupils reading and talked with them about their reading both at home and at school. I checked a range of documents relating to safeguarding with you and your administrative staff. We also examined details of pupils' attendance, pupils' progress and the school's self-evaluation and development plan. I took account of the 30 responses to the Ofsted online Parent View survey and the 30 additional written comments from parents. I also took account of the 11 responses to the staff survey.