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Miss Beverley Donald
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Dear Miss Donald

Short inspection of St Michael's CofE Primary School

Following my visit to the school on 18 December 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 predecessor school was judged to be good in June 2016.

This school continues to be good.

The leadership team has maintained the good quality of education in the school since the last inspection. The school joined the Bishop Anthony Educational Trust (BAET) as an academy in October 2016 and you were appointed as executive headteacher in September 2017. Since then, you have quickly built strong relationships with your team of staff and together you ensure that pupils have an enjoyable and successful experience at school. Pupils and staff model the school's Christian values well, because they treat each other with respect and kindness. There is a real sense of care for one another.

You have an accurate view of the school's strengths and areas for development. Your plans include appropriate actions to improve further the quality of teaching and to ensure that all pupils make as much progress as they can. At the end of key stage 2, the proportion of pupils attaining the expected standard in reading and mathematics has been above the national average for the last two years. However, pupils did not achieve as well in writing, so you have made improving pupils' progress and attainment in this subject a key focus for the whole school.

Parents are overwhelmingly positive about the work of the school. Many parents praise the way their child's individual needs are known and met. All parents I spoke to and those who responded to Ofsted's online questionnaire, Parent View, would recommend the school.

Leaders have tackled effectively the areas for improvement identified at the last inspection. You ensure that there are half-termly checks on pupils' progress and

that action is taken to support at any pupils at risk of not reaching the standard of which they are capable. In addition, you pay close attention to the progress made by disadvantaged pupils and those with special educational needs and/or disabilities (SEND). The school's assessment information shows that there is no difference between the progress of pupils who benefit from additional funding and that of other pupils. You frequently review the work in pupils' books to ensure that all pupils, including the most able, are being provided with work that builds on what they already know and can do.

At the last inspection, governors were asked to ensure that they had a deeper understanding of pupils' progress. Governors receive detailed reports about the progress of all groups of pupils, including those who are disadvantaged, every term. Governors check the impact of additional funding through the questions they put to leaders. They also review the reports about the quality of teaching, learning and assessment prepared by an external education consultant.

The local governing board is committed to the school and is very keen to ensure that the school retains its position as an important part of the village community. Members of the board understand the school's strengths and areas for improvement and they provide appropriate support and challenge for leaders.

The trust is effective in supporting you to bring about further improvements to overall provision. For example, they commission an improvement adviser to visit the school each term to review the quality of teaching, and to provide training linked to your school development plan for all staff.

Safeguarding is effective.

Leaders ensure that safeguarding arrangements are fit for purpose. All staff have up-to-date child protection training and they receive regular updates. As a result, they are knowledgeable about their safeguarding responsibilities, including how to report any concerns that they have. Leaders ensure that thorough pre-employment checks are carried out on all staff.

Leaders know the needs of individual pupils very well. Child protection records are stored securely and contain relevant information. The staff I spoke to during the inspection agreed that pupils are safe and well looked after. Pupils told me that they feel safe in school. They explained that everyone has a 'trusted adult' who will help them if they are worried about anything. In addition, pupils told me that there is no bullying at the school because everyone cares about each other.

Inspection findings

- I wanted to find out about the quality of teaching in key stage 1. This is because over the last two years, attainment in reading, writing and mathematics has been below the national average.
- You ensure that teachers have a sound understanding of the curriculum they are delivering. As a result, teachers plan lessons that are well matched to the typical

age-related standards in each year group. Pupils' English books show that teachers plan tasks that build on what pupils, including the most-able, already know and can do. In addition, teachers have high expectations of the amount and quality of work that pupils will produce. Consequently, most pupils are making good progress in reading and writing.

- I also wanted to find out about pupils' progress in writing in key stage 2. This was because over time pupils have made less progress in writing than in other subjects. You ensure that pupils have frequent opportunities to write in tasks linked to books that pupils have read and topics they are learning about. For example, pupils in Year 5 and 6 have used their knowledge gained from history lessons about the First World War and from reading 'War Horse' by Michael Morpurgo to produce diary entries and letters written as if they were soldiers from the time.
- Teachers have strong subject knowledge. They place a high priority on vocabulary and language choices and, as a result, pupils take extra care to ensure that their writing appeals to their intended audience. Pupils' books show that by the time they reach Year 6, many are fluent and expressive writers. Teachers plan tasks that will develop pupils' knowledge of spelling, punctuation and grammar, appropriate to their year group. Pupils' books show that the majority can apply this knowledge accurately. However, in some classes, some pupils make repeated errors with basic spelling and punctuation.
- Pupils experience a broad and balanced curriculum. Leaders ensure that enough time is given to learning in all subjects so that pupils can acquire a deep knowledge of the topics that they are studying. For example, in a geography-based topic about volcanoes, pupils learn about the physical and environmental impact of an eruption as well as the emotional impact on the communities who live nearby. You are currently revising the curriculum to ensure that there is clear progression in subject-specific skills through key stage 1 and key stage 2, for example building on how pupils read more-complex maps and how they analyse a wider range of historical sources to find out about the past. This is to ensure that all pupils are challenged sufficiently to reach the standards of which they are capable in all subjects.
- Leaders ensure that there are meaningful opportunities for pupils to apply their reading, writing and mathematical skills in a range of subjects across the curriculum. For example, pupils' science books show that they make good progress in representing and analysing information they collect from carrying out experiments. They also write detailed reports about their findings.
- Pupils develop a good understanding of British values. They are proud of their additional responsibilities on the school council and as house captains. In addition, all Year 6 pupils become a buddy for every new pupil who starts in Reception. Pupils told me that this is very important because it helps the younger children to settle in quickly. Pupils also develop an age-appropriate understanding of the major world religions.
- One pupil told me that it was important to learn about other people's beliefs 'to be respectful and to have a good knowledge of the world we live in'. As a result of the curriculum and the rich opportunities that pupils experience, they become

well-rounded young people who are well prepared for the next stage in their education.

Next steps for the school

Leaders and those responsible for governance should ensure that:

- teachers increase the opportunities for pupils to edit and improve their writing so that they do not make repeated errors with spelling and punctuation
- they continue with their work to revise the curriculum to ensure that pupils build on their skills in all subjects as they progress through key stage 1 and key stage 2.

I am copying this letter to the chair of the board of trustees and the chief executive officer of the multi-academy trust, the director of education for the Diocese of Hereford, the regional schools commissioner and the director of children's services for Herefordshire. This letter will be published on the Ofsted website.

Yours sincerely

Jo Evans
Her Majesty's Inspector

Information about the inspection

During the inspection, I met with you and the deputy headteacher, parents and governors. I spoke to a representative of the multi academy trust (BAET). We visited classrooms and looked at pupils' work together. I also met with a group of pupils. I reviewed the school's website and documents, including the single central record of recruitment and vetting checks, and child protection systems. I also reviewed the school's self-evaluation, improvement plans, monitoring information and pupils' progress and assessment information. I took account of the 22 responses by parents to Ofsted's online questionnaire, Parent View. There were no responses to the staff survey. There were no responses to the pupil questionnaire.