

9 May 2019

Miss Alexandra Robbins  
Headteacher  
Berkeley Primary School  
Marybrook Street  
Berkeley  
Gloucestershire  
GL13 9AZ

Dear Miss Robbins

### **Short inspection of Berkeley Primary School**

Following my visit to the school on 26 April 2019, 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 your predecessor school was judged to be good in October 2013.

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.**

There have been a significant number of changes since the inspection of the predecessor school. Berkeley Primary School is now part of the Cotswold Beacon Academy Trust (CBAT). There has been a high turnover of staff. There have been changes in the leadership team with your appointment as headteacher, a new deputy headteacher and a school business manager. Parents are positive about these changes and spoke to the inspector about how you have 'a genuine concern for children' and that 'children are at the centre of what [you] are trying to achieve'. At the time of this inspection there remained staff vacancies, most notably a leader of the early years provision. Nonetheless, you and your team are working hard to drive forward the significant improvements required to ensure that pupils receive an effective and high-quality education. Leaders have correctly identified the key issues to be tackled, for example early years provision (EYFS), raising achievement in reading and mathematics through consistently high-quality teaching, and improving communication with parents.

Since your appointment as headteacher, you have taken decisive action to quickly improve the quality of education for pupils. For example, you have not shied away from tackling the underperformance of teachers when they do not meet your high expectations. You are working closely with the school improvement partner and the chief executive officer (CEO) of CBAT to ensure greater consistency in the quality of

teaching, learning and assessment. However, you and your senior leaders recognise that there is much more work to do to ensure that pupils receive the best learning opportunities, especially in the EYFS, reading and mathematics. The school improvement plan, while accurately identifying the improvements required, needs strengthening. The plan does not demonstrate well enough by whom, how or when the monitoring and evaluation of actions taken are to be completed. Furthermore, governors need to make leaders more accountable for the quality of education pupils receive.

The school typically provides a calm and happy environment. Most pupils demonstrate positive attitudes to their learning. They participate enthusiastically in their lessons and behave well. Pupils spoken with during the inspection expressed their enjoyment of school and the opportunities afforded to them. However, when activities do not meet pupils' needs, they become bored and disengaged. Consequently, when this happens learning stalls.

At the beginning of the inspection, we agreed the key lines of enquiry to be considered during the day. These included: how school leaders ensure that pupils are safe; how leaders ensure that there is a strong culture of reading, especially in key stage 1; the effectiveness of mathematics teaching; and the action of leaders in ensuring that children in the EYFS receive high-quality provision. These key lines of enquiry are considered below under 'safeguarding' and 'inspection findings'.

### **Safeguarding is effective.**

You, other staff and governors take your safeguarding responsibilities seriously. All safeguarding arrangements are fit for purpose and records are detailed and of a high quality. The online referral system is well organised and records information carefully. This means designated safeguarding staff are able to take appropriate and timely action to keep pupils safe.

Staff receive high-quality training and timely updates on keeping pupils safe. For example, staff have undertaken training in relation to female genital mutilation and how to protect pupils from the influence of radicalisation or extreme views. As a result, staff are confident in the action they should take if they have any concerns about the safety of a pupil.

The school's systems to check the suitability of staff to work with pupils meet requirements. Leaders and governors understand the importance of safer recruitment. This ensures that all staff are carefully vetted before they start employment to confirm they are suitable to work with children.

Staff form positive and trusting relationships with pupils. Pupils spoken with during the inspection reported that they are happy and feel safe in school. Most parents are confident that their children are kept safe and are well looked after while in school. Comments such as 'a happy, safe place' and 'my children are happy, safe and enjoy school' demonstrate how the school is committed to keeping pupils safe. However, some parents raised concerns that reported incidents of bullying are not always dealt with as quickly as they would like. Leaders recognise that

communication needs to further improve so parents have a clear understanding of the work of the school, including how they manage pupils' behaviour.

## **Inspection findings**

- Until recently, the teaching of reading, especially in key stage 1, has not been a high enough priority. Consequently, the percentage of pupils achieving at least the expected standard is well below the national average. Similarly, the proportion of pupils achieving greater depth in reading is below the national average. In key stage 2, there has been a year-on-year decline in the progress pupils make when compared to the national average.
- You have ensured that reading features more prominently on this year's school improvement plan and some early actions are positive. For example, you have changed the way that guided reading is taught. Activities are carefully planned to enable pupils to demonstrate their knowledge and understanding of the text and explore new vocabulary. Pupils show enthusiasm for the books they are reading. During the inspection, pupils were eager to talk about their favourite authors, such as Roald Dahl and JK Rowling, and the style of their books. The introduction of Bertie the Bus, which houses the library, is supporting you in developing pupils' love of reading. However, you know more work is needed across the school to improve consistency in the teaching of reading. For example, teachers' questions do not sufficiently probe pupils' thinking or deepen their understanding, particularly in relation to higher-order comprehension skills.
- Pupils who read to the inspector did so with confidence and enjoyment. They read fluently and accurately from a range of texts which precisely met their reading ability. Younger pupils were able to use their phonic knowledge with accuracy to tackle unknown vocabulary. However, teachers do not keep close enough checks on how frequently pupils are reading both at school and at home. This is limiting the progress pupils make.
- Pupils' achievement in mathematics is not high enough. In 2018, the proportions of key stage 1 pupils achieving at least the expected standard or greater depth were well below national averages. Outcomes also declined in key stage 2. Leaders have responded appropriately to this weakness by putting in place a new approach to the teaching of mathematics across the school. Teachers now provide pupils with increased levels of challenge, especially when applying their mathematical understanding to problem-solving activities. Pupils' work shows that their reasoning skills are developing well but, as yet, this is not consistent across all classes. This inconsistency is because teachers do not systematically provide pupils with the guidance they need to improve their work.
- Children in the EYFS do not make consistently strong progress from their starting points. Consequently, the proportion of children achieving a good level of development continues to fluctuate, and in 2018 was well below the national average. While leaders are taking decisive action to tackle this year-on-year variability, they are keenly aware that significant work needs to be undertaken to improve rapidly the quality of early years provision. Together, leaders are working extremely hard to appoint a new EYFS leader and drive forward the necessary improvements.

- Subject leaders are new to post, especially in English and mathematics. Consequently, leaders have only recently begun to play a lead role in developing aspects of teaching, learning and assessment in the subjects they lead.

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

Leaders and those responsible for governance should ensure that:

- they rapidly secure the leadership of the EYFS in order to tackle inconsistencies in children's achievement
- improvement plans demonstrate precisely how, when and by whom priorities will be measured for their impact on pupils' outcomes
- expectations of what all pupils can achieve rise significantly, especially in reading and mathematics
- they continue, at pace, to improve the quality of teaching, learning and assessment
- teachers consistently provide pupils with information as to how they can improve their learning
- subject leaders have increased opportunities to monitor and evaluate the quality of teaching, learning and assessment, especially in English and mathematics
- governors hold leaders robustly to account to ensure that pupils receive a high-quality education
- partnership working with leaders and parents is strengthened.

I am copying this letter to the chair of the board of governors and the CEO of the multi-academy trust, the regional schools commissioner and the director of children's services for Gloucestershire. This letter will be published on the Ofsted website.

Yours sincerely

Jen Southall  
**Her Majesty's Inspector**

### **Information about the inspection**

I met with you and your deputy headteacher. Together, we talked about the improvements which have been made since the previous inspection. We carried out a 'learning walk' through classes with a focus on English and mathematics. I held discussions with two governors and met with subject leaders. I spoke with the school improvement partner and the CEO from the multi-academy trust. I talked informally to pupils and heard them read. I looked at a wide range of documentation, including the school's evaluation of its own performance and

information relating to pupils' current achievement and progress. I also checked the effectiveness of the school's safeguarding arrangements. I spoke with parents at the start of the day. I considered the 76 responses to the online survey Parent View and the 71 additional text messages received from parents.