

Ofsted  
Piccadilly Gate  
Store Street  
Manchester  
M1 2WD

T 0300 123 4234  
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Ms Dawn Baker  
Acting Headteacher  
Brill Church of England School  
The Firs  
Brill  
Aylesbury  
Buckinghamshire  
HP18 9RY

Dear Ms Baker

### **Short inspection of Brill Church of England School**

Following my visit to the school on 30 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 the school was judged to be good in June 2015.

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

The leadership team has maintained the good quality of education in the school since the last inspection. Based on the evidence gathered during this short inspection, I am of the opinion that the school has demonstrated strong practice and marked improvement in specific areas. This may indicate that the school has improved significantly overall. Therefore, I am recommending that the school's next inspection be a section 5 inspection.

There is much to celebrate about this school, not least the way in which the entire school community has embraced its aspirational motto, 'With the wind in our sails'. Pupils thrive in the very positive environment created by teachers and leaders. The school's values, which focus on developing pupils' love of learning, strengthening their resilience and showing kindness to others, permeate all aspects of its work. Across year groups and subjects, pupils appreciate that learning might be hard but it is also worthwhile and enriching. They are exceptionally well stimulated by the challenging topics they study. Pupils are also enthused by the raft of additional opportunities provided by the school, which are a feature of the curriculum. These opportunities are carefully planned so that they link closely with the topics studied in class, providing extra insights and bringing the subject matter to life. Leaders and teaching staff have also developed an exceptionally nurturing culture in which pupils feel included and valued. Pupils are encouraged to reflect deeply and think about others who are struggling, both within their own community and further afield.

Since the previous inspection, the areas for improvement have been fully met and the provision has gone from strength to strength. In the 2018 national tests and assessments, pupils' achievement was exceptionally strong. Pupils' results were particularly impressive in key stage 2. You and your staff have not been complacent following these top-notch results. There is a strong ethos of self-improvement. Teaching staff are committed to trialling new approaches, for instance introducing new ways for pupils to edit their writing. Teachers work well with their colleagues to make sure that new methods are effectively implemented.

Teaching in English and mathematics provides high levels of challenge which pupils relish. Teachers pose questions that require pupils to think hard, including in key stage 1. Pupils' intellectual curiosity is aroused because they are incrementally introduced to new knowledge across a wide range of subjects. Leaders' stringent checks ensure that the agreed approaches to teaching and the curriculum are embedded across the school. Occasionally, in subjects other than English and mathematics, tasks do not enable pupils to fully acquire the subject-specific knowledge and skills intended.

The school is outward-facing. It plays an active role in the collaboration of local schools, as well as cultivating international partnerships. By working in close conjunction with pupils' families, you have strengthened the support you provide for pupils with additional needs, including those eligible for pupil premium funding. As a result, you have successfully reduced the rate of persistent absence since September 2018. Of note is the way that you have developed the provision for pupils with special educational needs and/or disabilities (SEND). You have ensured that pupils' individual needs are more accurately identified. In addition, the support pupils with SEND now receive in class better develops their capabilities and independence. Teachers and assistants adopt a 'can-do' approach when working with pupils with SEND, which has enabled the majority to make strides in their learning.

The governing body has evolved and is now leaner and sharper. Governors have a detailed overview of all aspects of the school, which they use to ask leaders challenging questions. They are very attuned to the new approaches that the school is adopting and have ensured that all stakeholders are aware of the rationale that underpins each new approach. Governors rightly focus on how well the school is supporting all of its pupils, especially those with additional needs. They carefully scrutinise information on attendance and the progress made by pupils targeted for support, making excellent use of it to suggest further improvements.

### **Safeguarding is effective.**

Safeguarding procedures are fit for purpose and well managed. The designated lead is doggedly persistent in her efforts to ensure that pupils receive the support they need from external agencies, including the local authority's welfare officers. She meticulously monitors this support to make sure that it is having the intended impact. Her detailed knowledge of each pupil's circumstances means that, where necessary, she has been able to request that the local authority enhances the

support it provides.

The school's work to keep pupils safe when online involves parents, carers and pupils and is carefully considered. It has been strengthened by experts from the police and other organisations who provide advice for parents as well as pupils, including in after-school parents' meetings dedicated to this issue. Professional advice and guidance are effectively built upon through the personal development curriculum, which all pupils access.

### **Inspection findings**

- We agreed to focus on whether leaders, including governors, have high enough expectations of pupils. Across the school, pupils show great determination, striving to achieve the very best they can. They know that this means making mistakes along the way. Teachers have very high aspirations for pupils' achievement but they are very encouraging too. As a consequence, pupils embrace the opportunities for learning that their errors provide. Of the pupils who responded to the online survey, 88% said that they were given work that challenged them all or most of the time. One pupil commented that their teacher often adds the word 'yet' when pupils say they cannot do something in order to emphasise the need for perseverance and resilience. They went on to provide the example of a fellow pupil saying that they could not do algebra, with the teacher's response, 'You cannot do algebra, yet.'
- Teachers and leaders have systematically and resolutely strengthened the quality of teaching. This, in turn, has improved pupils' outcomes across most of the school, including in early years and also in the phonics screening check. In both of these areas, pupils' outcomes are well above national averages. Pupils' attainment was also above average in key stage 1 and 2 national tests and assessments in 2018, with a much greater-than-average proportion of pupils reaching the higher standards in reading and mathematics in key stage 2. Results in the reading test were particularly impressive.
- We also explored the impact that new teaching approaches are having on pupils' writing in key stage 2. We agreed this as a focus because, although attainment was high in writing in the 2018 key stage 2 assessments, progress was not quite as high as leaders hoped. Pupils' writing has developed extremely well. It is vibrant and stimulating. Pupils have the opportunity to write in different genres, including forms that offer additional challenges, such as poetry and play scripts. Pupils are able to make extensive changes to their own writing, which improves the impact it has on the reader.
- We reviewed most-able pupils' reading in key stage 1 and the reading curriculum across both key stages. There is convincing evidence that reading is a strength across the school. One important reason for this is the emphasis placed on pupils accessing a wide range of whole, rich texts within the curriculum. In key stage 1, pupils are taught to read fluently and can very confidently match sounds to letters. Teachers' strong subject knowledge enables pupils to make strides in their reading. For example, in Year 2, pupils were responding to the book they were reading, exploring the way the writer used descriptions to create a

particular effect on the reader. The teacher posed thought-provoking questions, introducing new ways for pupils to conceptualise the text as a work of fiction rather than fact.

- The curriculum in a variety of subjects other than English and mathematics has developed over the last few years, with notable improvements in some areas. For example, pupils use their scientific knowledge to interpret the results they collect from the experiments they carry out, fostering a love of scientific analysis. Occasionally, the tasks teachers set for pupils in some subjects in the wider curriculum do not enable pupils to acquire subject-specific knowledge and skills as fully as intended.
- Tremendous care and attention are given to pupils with additional needs to ensure that they flourish in the same way that other pupils do. Additional support is very carefully planned and overseen by an experienced member of staff. She has profound insight into the individual needs that pupils have and the ways that these can be best met, including through closing the gaps that some pupils have in their vocabulary and knowledge. In your role as special educational needs coordinator (SENCo), you have very effectively developed the way teaching assistants support pupils who have additional needs in class. Assistants use their strong subject knowledge to question pupils in a precise way, which often enables pupils to work things out for themselves.
- Another area that we focused on was safeguarding. Pupils told me that they feel extremely safe and that bullying is incredibly rare. They all said how much they like coming to school. One parent, echoing the views of many, used the Parent View survey to comment on the 'lovely family feeling' at the school. Another mentioned 'how much the school values children for their individual characters'. Several comments from parents reinforced the school's view that relationships with parents have strengthened over time. Senior leaders are very transparent in the way they communicate with the parent body, fostering high levels of trust between the school and most parents. The positive nature of the relationship between school and home enables leaders to raise concerns with parents, including concerns about attendance, in a timely and open manner.

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

Leaders and those responsible for governance should ensure that:

- the tasks teachers set for pupils in the wider curriculum more consistently enable pupils to acquire subject-specific knowledge and skills.

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 Buckinghamshire. 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 records of recruitment checks, policies and procedures. I reviewed a range of information, which included the school's self-evaluation and improvement plans, and information about pupils' progress. Accompanied by you, I observed learning in mathematics, writing, reading and some subjects in the wider curriculum, and made short visits to all classes at least once. I also met with a group of teachers and with a group of pupils, and held two meetings with senior leaders, including the SENCo. In the second meeting, I undertook a scrutiny of pupils' work, accompanied by senior leaders. Separate meetings were held with the designated safeguarding lead and with members of the governing body, including the chair. A telephone call was made to the representative from the diocese who has been supporting your school.

I reviewed 75 responses to Ofsted's online parent questionnaire, Parent View, including 50 free-text comments. I also considered 58 responses to the pupil survey.