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Mr Shaun Farrington
Headteacher
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Dear Mr Farrington

Short inspection of Burford Primary and Nursery School

Following my visit to the school on 8 May 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 December 2013.

This school continues to be good.

The leadership team has maintained the good quality of education in the school since the last inspection.

You have made sure the school is a welcome, orderly, calm and inclusive environment, where everyone is treated with the utmost respect.

Leaders are passionate, demonstrating a great desire to improve, and are rightly proud of their work redesigning the school's curriculum. Your intention to provide learning opportunities and experiences that extend your pupils' horizons is clear. Staff and pupils show great enthusiasm for the well-thought-out topics and theme weeks, along with the trips, which one pupil explained 'bring the topics alive'. Staff willingly take on board new ways of working and support each other to implement new strategies. Pupils say their teachers explain things well and make lessons fun.

In 2016, the school became an academy with the Transform Trust (the trust) and has put in place a skilled and experienced local governing body. The trust allows the governing body great autonomy to ensure that the school engages and reflects the unique needs of the Burford community. Leaders, at all levels, have a clear sense of what needs to improve and what actions are being taken. They all actively monitor the work of the school and have developed greater focus in this, evaluating their actions more carefully. Governors fully understand the need to gather information beyond the headteacher and seek information from other school staff, trust representatives and an external consultant.

The parents I spoke with were unanimously positive about the school, which reflects the school's own recent surveys. Parents told me that Burford is 'a fantastic school' and one said, 'I feel lucky to have a place for my child here.' Parents and pupils highly value the supportive relationships pupils have with staff and pupils feel genuinely cared for.

Pupils are polite and courteous everywhere around school, contributing well to the calm learning environment. They demonstrate a deep sense of respect, both for adults and other pupils in school. This was clearly evident when a group of pupils talked with great admiration for a disabled pupil and also about their learning of different religions. One boy who was fasting for Ramadan explained that other pupils respect this and are supportive too. Pupils hold the school's motto, 'Attend, Aspire, Achieve', close to their heart. They explained that 'aspire' means to have a dream and they instantly talked about theirs. The school's curriculum has given pupils high aspirations, and they say that this school is helping them to achieve their goals. Burford pupils love their school and they cannot think of anything lacking or wrong with it, which is reflected in their good attendance.

At the last inspection, leaders were asked to improve the quality of teaching in mathematics to improve pupils' progress. The previous weaknesses had been mainly addressed and outcomes in mathematics were strong until they dipped significantly at the end of key stage 2 last year. A new national curriculum has led to higher expectations of pupils and leaders are now addressing these by making the necessary changes to the teaching of mathematics. Leaders were also asked to improve pupils' writing skills, particularly their spelling, and ensure that pupils write at length in different subjects. Pupils are extremely proud of their writing and their outcomes are consistently close to the national average. Pupils write at length in their English, topic, science and religious education books. Their work is of a high standard and beautifully presented across all subjects. Although it does not stand out as a significant concern in pupils' books or in pupils' outcomes for writing, leaders intend to improve how spelling is taught later in the year.

Safeguarding is effective.

Leaders have ensured that safeguarding arrangements are fit for purpose. Staff and governors have received up-to-date training and understand their safeguarding responsibilities. Pupils are confident there is an adult they can speak to if they have any worries, including the valued Place2Be counsellors. Staff are aware of the risks, know how to spot potential concerns and quickly report when they have a concern. Leaders involve external agencies when necessary and follow up concerns thoroughly. Both the trust and the governing body regularly check the school's safeguarding procedures.

Pupils feel safe in school and leaders have also ensured that the curriculum supports pupils' understanding of how to keep themselves safe. For example, pupils understand how to protect themselves from the potential risks of the internet or when out and about on the roads. Older pupils learn about the risks of alcohol or

drug abuse through the 'DARE programme' and healthy and unhealthy relationships through the 'GREAT project'. Pupils fully understand what bullying is. Everyone in school appreciates that bullying can happen from time to time but pupils say it is rare and quickly and effectively dealt with.

Inspection findings

- Pupils' outcomes in the Year 1 phonics screening check and in reading at the end of key stage 1 are closely in line with national averages. Following a dip in attainment at the end of key stage 2 in 2017, leaders took concerted action to place reading at the heart of their curriculum and develop pupils' love of reading. Pupils thoroughly enjoy the quality class texts and hearing their teachers read to them each day.
- Alongside this, leaders introduced a new approach to teaching reading and developed a clear strategy for developing pupils' comprehension of texts. Pupils now use the 'Burford Reading Gang' characters to confidently talk about their reading and what they understand. During the inspection, Year 2 pupils used 'Lucy Literal' and Year 3 used 'Inspector Inference' to successfully locate and infer information about the texts they were reading in class. Year 6 pupils also explained how the 'Having a PEE' strategy ensures that they provide full responses backed up with evidence from the text.
- As a result of the actions taken, there was an improvement in pupils' attainment and progress in reading at the end of key stage 2 in 2018. Leaders are continuing to build on this by refining their new approach and ensuring that it is implemented consistently through school. They also need to ensure that more pupils are challenged in greater depth with their reading so that more achieve higher standards of attainment.
- Although outcomes in mathematics had historically been strong, attainment at the end of key stage 2 dipped in 2018 and pupils' progress fell to significantly below average. Leaders have responded assertively. The mathematics leader and teaching staff have received training and coaching to develop a new approach to teaching mathematics. This has resulted in higher expectations, in line with a more challenging mathematics curriculum. Pupils' books show that lessons are carefully planned in clear steps with opportunities for pupils to practise together and then work independently.
- Pupils say that new concepts are explained clearly and pupils are being encouraged to explain their thinking around these. As teachers are becoming more confident with the new approach, they are thinking more carefully about how they can challenge pupils' thinking throughout lessons. At the same time, staff are helping pupils to develop a 'growth mind-set', so pupils respond positively to this greater challenge and learn from their mistakes. A new strategy for developing pupils' mental arithmetic has also been introduced and this is improving the fluency of pupils' calculation.
- From talking to pupils and looking at pupils' work in books with leaders, it is clear that pupils' progress in mathematics is improving. This supports leaders' views that pupils' attainment in mathematics will be improved this year. However, these

approaches are very new and not yet fully established in all classes. Strategies need further developing and refining across the school to ensure that pupils secure sufficient depth of learning. Several new staff are joining the school in September and leaders are actively considering how to support their successful transition and establish greater consistency in teaching.

- The school has a very high proportion of disadvantaged pupils and receives significant pupil premium funding. Leaders have ensured that the curriculum provides disadvantaged pupils with experiences to enrich their learning, ignite their interest and inspire them to aim for high standards. For example, the forest school enables pupils to learn outdoors and build confidence and self-awareness, while exciting trips provide cultural enrichment. Previously, the school has received accolades for the outcomes of disadvantaged pupils. However, for the past two years the attainment of these pupils has been much lower than that of other pupils in the school.
- Staff have great knowledge of individual pupils and the support these pupils need. For example, they recognise that many disadvantaged pupils have social, emotional and behavioural needs that are a barrier to effective learning. They have put in place a counselling service that effectively supports pupils with these needs. Leaders have also put in place additional support from teaching assistants to help disadvantaged pupils catch up with their peers in reading and writing. They have ensured that teaching assistants receive appropriate coaching and training so they can support pupils more effectively. Funding has been used effectively to enable staff to rigorously and determinedly maintain good levels of attendance for disadvantaged pupils.
- While all leaders are fully aware of barriers that their disadvantaged pupils face, they do not always target the pupil premium funding effectively to overcome these. Therefore, many disadvantaged pupils do not achieve the standards they are capable of. Leaders have not evaluated the impact of the pupil premium funding in sufficient detail to know what is working well and what is less successful. Leaders' evaluations of how the funding is used need to be sharper so that it can be more effectively targeted to make increased impact.

Next steps for the school

Leaders and those responsible for governance should ensure that they:

- develop and refine the new curriculum approaches for reading and mathematics and ensure their consistent implementation so that pupils can deepen their learning, enabling more pupils to achieve higher standards of attainment
- carefully evaluate the use of pupil premium funding so that funds can be targeted more effectively to increase the progress of disadvantaged pupils and enable more to achieve the standards expected of them.

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

Yours sincerely

Claire Stylianides
Ofsted Inspector

Information about the inspection

During the inspection, I held meetings with you and your senior and middle leaders. I met with the chief executive officer for the trust and with the chair and vice-chair of the local governing body. I spoke with several staff including the administrator, a midday supervisor and a breakfast club supervisor. I visited almost all classrooms with you and examined a range of pupils' books. I spoke with pupils informally during lessons and during a group discussion about their experience of school and I also looked at the 24 responses to Ofsted's pupil survey. I observed pupils' behaviour around the school and in lessons.

I looked at the few responses to Parent View, Ofsted's online survey, and I spoke with a number of parents at the start of the school day. I also took into account the 127 responses to the school's own recent questionnaire to parents. There were nine responses to the Ofsted staff survey, which were also considered. I examined a range of documents, including safeguarding records and policies, a summary of the school's self-evaluation and its improvement plan, and information relating to pupils' progress, attendance and behaviour.