

23 May 2019

Mr Ian Garner
Headteacher
Burford School
Marlow Bottom
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Dear Mr Garner

Short inspection of Burford School

Following my visit to the school on 14 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 the school was judged to be good in November 2015.

This school continues to be good.

The leadership team has maintained the good quality of education in the school since the last inspection. You became headteacher in April 2016 and since then you have made many changes to improve the quality of teaching and learning. The deputy headteacher joined the leadership team in September 2018. Together, you lead with the determination that pupils will be successful in all aspects of school life, academically, socially and emotionally.

Burford School now provides education for three-year-old children in a teacher-led Nursery, which opened in September 2018. Children settle well as a result of the very strong adult-child relationships. During my visit to the Nursery, I observed children sharing fairly, and being confident and enthusiastic in their learning and play. Adults know the children well and, consequently, the wide range of activities available are carefully matched to children's needs and interests.

Leaders have ensured that the curriculum is broad, exciting and taught to a high standard. Specialist teachers for music, modern foreign languages and sport make sure that expectations are always high. I observed a Year 1 music lesson in which pupils confidently worked together and used simple musical notation to compose a melody. They conscientiously considered the pitch of each note.

Burford is a happy and harmonious school. Staff are highly committed, with one governor commenting, 'They have Burford running through their veins.' Pupils enjoy attending school. They say that their lessons are fun, with one pupil adding, 'We have to use our brains.' Pupils appreciate many aspects of school life, including trips, sport and the choir. They love the many leadership roles they have, such as e-safety

officers and 'agents for change', whose role is to focus on friendship and building strong relationships. Parents are also very impressed with the school. One parent, summing up the views of many, commented: 'Burford looks after the "whole" child, developing confident children who are ready to take their next steps in this world.'

At the last inspection, leaders were asked to ensure that school improvement planning was focused on strengthening pupils' progress. Leaders' evaluation of the effectiveness of the school is accurate and school development planning is focused on the right areas. Governors hold leaders to account well for pupils' outcomes.

Safeguarding is effective.

There is a strong safeguarding culture in the school. Leaders are tenacious in their approach, ensuring that the pupils in their care get the support they need. Leaders, including governors, have ensured that keeping pupils safe is a shared responsibility. The staff I spoke to, during the inspection, evidently understand their role in keeping pupils safe. As a result, day-to-day routines are secure and any necessary safeguarding action is completed without delay. Pre-employment checks, ensuring the suitability of all adults who work or volunteer in school, are fully in place.

Pupils told me that they have many adults in school who they can talk to if they have a worry. One pupil said, 'The adults watch over us well.' Pupils told me that bullying does not happen often, but if it were to happen, 'Teachers would sort it out.' Leaders ensure that the curriculum includes many opportunities for pupils to learn about keeping themselves safe. I visited the school during Mental Health Awareness Week, a topic that permeated through all aspects of the school's activities. The aim of leaders is for each pupil to be the happiest and the best version of themselves. Leaders have created the 'Burford Body', a mascot that helps pupils to understand how their physical and mental well-being affects all aspects of their lives. As a result, pupils are articulate about their emotions and understand what to do if they are not feeling their best. Parents are supported to understand how to strengthen their children's mental health. The school's website includes 'stress-busting top tips', with regular updates provided through the school's social media account and parents' workshops.

Inspection findings

- At the beginning of the inspection, we agreed that the focus would be on: the effectiveness of the teaching of writing; the progress that pupils, including the disadvantaged, make in reading; and how effectively leaders and governors ensure that the school continues to improve.
- Leaders have introduced a range of strategies to improve the teaching of writing. Carefully selected texts are chosen to ensure that pupils have access to high-quality writing and a rich vocabulary. Consequently, pupils' word choice is ambitious. For example, in a Year 5 English lesson, pupils were suggesting words such as 'cramped', 'sorrowful' and 'anxious' for their writing on the plight of refugees. Work in pupils' books and the school's current assessment information show that these teaching strategies are having a positive impact on the progress

pupils make. Pupils' skills in spelling, grammar and punctuation are of a good standard. They are able to improve their writing further through skilful editing and redrafting. Pupils take pride in the presentation of their work. Nevertheless, the high standard of writing seen in English lessons is not consistently maintained in pupils' work across the wider curriculum.

- Pupils love reading at Burford. They talk confidently about their favourite authors and books, about what they are reading and what they want to read next. Weekly reading tips and regular reading newsletters support parents to select books that may interest their children further. These are available in the school's well-stocked library. The buzz around reading is tangible throughout the school. Leaders ensure that there is a clear progression in how pupils are taught comprehension skills. Consequently, pupils, including those who are disadvantaged, make strong progress in reading. The proportion of pupils who reach the expected standard in the Year 1 phonics screening check has been above the national average for several years.
- At the previous inspection, leaders were asked to improve the role of the middle leader. You have been very effective in this, developing the skills of middle leaders well, including beyond the school. For example, the middle leader responsible for mathematics is currently supporting eight other primary schools to improve their practice. Middle leaders contribute to the school's improvement by ensuring that teaching, learning and assessment are effective. They monitor the quality of teaching and learning well, using information gathered to focus sharply on areas for development and the training of staff. This results in a reflective culture at Burford, with staff sharing leaders' ambitions to continually improve. Leaders have started to monitor pupils' progress from their starting points in a range of subjects more effectively. Nevertheless, this is not yet fully embedded in the school.
- Governors have a thorough understanding of the school's strengths and areas for development, and provide effective support and challenge. They validate what leaders tell them through regular monitoring visits and are highly ambitious for pupils.

Next steps for the school

Leaders and those responsible for governance should ensure that:

- pupils' writing across the curriculum is of the same high standard as in their English books
- they monitor pupils' progress carefully, including in foundation subjects.

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

Yours sincerely

Lea Hannam
Ofsted Inspector

Information about the inspection

During the inspection, I met with you and your deputy headteacher to discuss the school's effectiveness. We visited classrooms to observe pupils learning, talk to them, hear them read and look at their work. With your senior leadership team, we looked at the quality of work in a range of pupils' books. I considered 182 responses from parents to the online questionnaire, Parent View, including 52 free-text comments. I also spoke to parents at the beginning of the school day. I took account of 27 responses to Ofsted's online staff questionnaire and 173 responses to the pupil survey. I also had a meeting with a group of pupils to gather their views of the school.

I met with five governors, including the chair of the governing body, and held a telephone conversation with a representative of the local authority. I met with a group of middle leaders. I evaluated the school's safeguarding procedures. A wide range of documents was examined, including: the school's self-evaluation; school improvement planning; information about pupils' progress; and various policies, including the child protection policy. I also examined the school's website.