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Mrs Laura Hilliard
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Dear Mrs Hilliard

Short inspection of Brinkworth Earl Danby's Church of England Primary

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 school was judged to be good in April 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 and your deputy headteacher have worked together effectively to implement changes to the curriculum and develop the quality of teaching. Recently, the school has experienced some staff absences and changes. However, you have now re-established the team of teachers to take the school forward. Middle leaders have used your partnership with a local alliance of schools to provide good staff professional development. As a result, effective teaching promotes pupils' progress, and standards have either been maintained or built upon since the previous inspection. In 2017 and 2018, the proportion of Year 6 pupils reaching expected levels in reading, writing and mathematics exceeded those found nationally. Your accurate self-evaluation has identified that increasing the proportion of pupils reaching the higher standard, particularly in writing, remains a priority. The school's experienced and effective governors know what the school has achieved and have well-founded plans to improve it further.

Almost all parents who responded to Parent View are highly positive about the well-balanced and good quality of care, teaching and motivating learning opportunities that the school provides. A parent typically expressed this by saying, 'As a parent, a balanced school life is what represents a good school – Brinkworth Earl Danby provides this.' A small number of parents felt that concerns they raise with leaders are not dealt with well. After similar outcomes from their own survey, governors and leaders are seeking to improve their communication and response to parents' concerns.

This year, you have reviewed and improved the planning for a broader curriculum. Topics such as 'Dinosaur Planet' enthused pupils in the Year 1/2 class, who developed their own museum. The updated curriculum and assessment procedures provide a clearer picture of pupils' progress from their different starting points across the whole range of subjects.

Provision in the early years was found to require improvement at the last inspection. The proportion of children reaching a good level of development rose markedly in 2018 and was well above the national average. Nonetheless, the early years formed part of this inspection in order to review children's learning across the whole curriculum.

The previous inspection also identified that disadvantaged pupils and those with special educational needs and/or disabilities (SEND) should make better progress. Currently the plans on the school's website for the use of additional funding for disadvantaged pupils do not identify how pupils' barriers to learning are to be overcome. Therefore this aspect of the school's work was included in this inspection. However, the school is an inclusive community, fully reflecting its Christian values. Parents recognise and value this aspect of the school. As one parent commented, 'A caring, inclusive and highly professional school which consistently goes the extra mile.' Leaders were also asked to ensure that pupils were actively engaged in their learning. This inspection showed that pupils enjoy their learning and lessons proceed calmly and purposefully.

Safeguarding is effective.

Leaders are vigilant for pupils' safety and well-being and are well supported by governors, who prioritise and monitor this aspect of the school's work. Policies, procedures and training are in line with current requirements and are effective. Leaders ensure that staff are trained to meet pupils' medical needs. Staff know the pupils well and confidently refer any concerns to leaders that a pupil may be at risk of harm. In response, leaders persist in their efforts to ensure that other agencies provide pupils and families with the support they need.

The administration of safe recruitment of staff and volunteers is exemplary. The safe management of both school sites is consistent and effective. Pupils in particular recognise the lengths the school goes to in ensuring their safety. They also say they are taught well how to keep themselves safe, for example on the internet. Pupils have confidence that other pupils will be friendly and that, should any bullying occur, it would be dealt with quickly.

In the past, the school has had a higher number of exclusions than the national average. This has been significantly reduced and there have been no exclusions this year. Pupils who have challenging behaviour are well supported.

Inspection findings

- During this inspection, I reviewed the progress of children in the early years. I

also reviewed the progress made by the most able pupils and boys in writing. Boys have not always reached the higher standard in writing, despite them doing so in mathematics. My last area of enquiry was the effectiveness of leaders' plans to promote the progress of disadvantaged pupils and those with SEND.

- Children's skills on entry to the school vary considerably. Some children are ready to take on new challenges of learning but others have not developed the language or social skills typical for their age. Leaders have developed the curriculum so that children work together on projects to broaden their vocabulary and knowledge of the world. During the inspection, the outdoor area was developed with winter activities. Children had made their own snow and used slippery plastic shapes to build with and explore. Their recent winter topic has widened children's understanding of animals that come out at night. Teachers have been involved in an established programme of early years development and the school has met the good standard of the programme for the third time.
- Children are given opportunities to freely write in their exploratory play. However, a number of children, particularly boys, are not yet forming letters accurately. The school has adopted cursive handwriting, but the development of this in the early years has not been fully established. This is slowing children's progress in writing and in some cases their motivation to write.
- For some boys, difficulties with handwriting continue into the next stage of their education. Consequently, they struggle to present their work neatly. Currently, this is limiting some boys in reaching the expected standard for their age and some of the most able pupils reaching the higher standard.
- Pupils in key stage 2 have motivating contexts for writing provided by the new topics in the curriculum. For example, pupils in upper key stage 2 have been enthused by writing both factually and creatively about mining and historical disasters. In some classes, teachers guide pupils to include age-appropriate grammar and vocabulary and pupils' work shows that some are moving towards the higher standard. Currently, however, the school's agreed focus on grammar and vocabulary has not been established in all year groups. Consequently, not all of the most able pupils are developing the formality and maturity of writing to show they have deepened their learning.
- The current plans for the use of additional funding to support disadvantaged pupils do not target the specific barriers which impede pupils' learning. Consequently, there is a lack of clarity about how the school's strategies are matched to pupils' needs and how assessments of pupils' progress will be used to check the effectiveness of spending.
- Recent developments in teaching have led to disadvantaged pupils and pupils with SEND being included well in mathematics lessons. Teachers adapt the learning effectively and pupils work enthusiastically and independently. However, at times pupils, particularly those who are disadvantaged and also have SEND, struggle to access the teaching in English lessons and their independent writing is limited. This is because teaching does not address these pupils' next steps in learning, and consequently their progress in writing is slower than it is in mathematics.

Next steps for the school

Leaders and those responsible for governance should:

- improve the teaching of writing so that children in the early years and pupils in key stage 1 develop the handwriting skills expected for their age
- further increase the proportion of pupils at both key stages 1 and 2 who reach the higher standard in writing
- ensure that additional funding for disadvantaged pupils is used effectively to overcome pupils' barriers to learning and secure their good progress, particularly in writing.

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

Yours sincerely

Wendy Marriott
Ofsted Inspector

Information about the inspection

During the inspection, I had meetings with you and your deputy headteacher. I discussed the progress of disadvantaged pupils and pupils with SEND with the inclusion leader. I met with a group of governors and had a telephone conversation with a representative of the local authority. I visited both school sites to look at learning in all classes. I reviewed the learning in pupils' workbooks in class and looked more closely at a sample of pupils' writing and topic books. I checked the school's single central record and discussed aspects of safeguarding with several members of staff. I reviewed policies, the school's self-evaluation and the current school development plan. I took account of the views of pupils through meeting with a representative group and speaking to others at lunchtime and through the 36 responses to the pupil questionnaire. I talked to a small number of parents at the start of the school day. I considered the views of others through the 33 responses to Ofsted's online survey, Parent View, and the 32 additional comments. The views of staff were considered through the 15 responses to the staff survey.