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Mrs K Whittington
Headteacher
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Dear Mrs Whittington

Short inspection of Burford School

Following my visit to the school on 10 November 2015, 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 December 2010.

This school continues to be good.

The leadership team has maintained the good quality of education in the school since the last inspection. They have addressed all the issues identified in the previous inspection report. Pupils now make more progress in mathematics and a very high proportion make better than expected progress to reach higher levels of attainment.

Teaching is consistently good and much is outstanding. School leaders have placed a high priority on this area of the school's work. Pupils make good progress over time and some make outstanding progress. Leaders and governors know that the proportion of pupils who made better than expected progress in reading and writing in the Key Stage 2 tests in 2015 was much lower than in mathematics, particularly for boys. They are taking effective action to address this issue and have introduced a new approach to the teaching of writing. At present it is too early to measure the difference that this new method is making. Pupils enjoy the new focus on using a range of texts to help them develop ideas and generate interesting vocabulary to improve their writing. This was clear to see in a lesson where the poem 'Last night I saw the city breathing' by Andrew Fusek Peters was used effectively to create ideas and consider powerful verbs in preparation for pupils' poems. Pupils were enthused about the possibility of composing their own poems on the theme of 'When I looked in through the classroom window last night...'. Teachers use innovative ideas, help pupils to think carefully and encourage them to take an active role in their learning. For example, during the inspection, Year 2 pupils visited the local woods to

experience at first hand the sights, sounds and smells within the woods to stimulate their ideas in preparation for writing.

Pupils now have a much better understanding of other cultures. Following the previous inspection, an effective link with a multicultural inner city school in Coventry was set up. This has been over a number of years and pupils in Year 4 begin to make links with pupils in this school. Exchange visits take place and this enhances pupils' understanding of life in modern Britain. Pupils have developed a good understanding of British values through personal, social and health education, assemblies and opportunities for discussion and sharing ideas in class. During a class assembly, for example, a poignant video clip of the Christmas ceasefire during World War I was used to aid pupils' understanding of Armistice Day. Pupils displayed great respect and empathy as they watched the video.

Leaders and governors regularly check on the school's progress. However, their evaluation of the school is not totally accurate. Although subject leaders and middle leaders have developed action plans for their area of responsibility, these are not sharply focused on improving outcomes for pupils. As a result, it is difficult for leaders and governors to determine the impact of their actions.

Safeguarding is effective.

- You ensure that all staff and visitors are appropriately vetted and checked for their suitability to work with children before taking up their role. You update the child protection policy regularly and make sure that all staff receive a suitable induction so that they understand their responsibilities relating to child protection before they start work at the school.
- You make sure any safeguarding concerns are dealt with appropriately and all staff keep up to date with current guidance about keeping children safe at school. Leaders and governors have ensured that all safeguarding arrangements meet requirements.

Inspection findings

- Leaders and governors are ambitious for the school. They place a high priority on ensuring that pupils 'enjoy, achieve and succeed together'. Governors provide highly effective challenge to school leaders and regularly check on the school's performance. They know the school very well.
- School leaders and governors work together to evaluate the school's performance and develop improvement plans as a result of their evaluation. However, the school improvement plan is not clearly linked to milestones in pupils' progress. As a result, leaders and governors are not able to check thoroughly whether all the steps they are taking to improve pupils' progress are successful.

- Middle leaders and subject leaders make improvements in their area of responsibility. However, they do not use information on pupils' achievements well enough to check on pupils' progress. Consequently, their monitoring lacks sufficient rigour.
- Children begin school in the Reception class with skills and abilities that are above those expected for their age. They make good progress overall. The large majority of children are well prepared for learning in Year 1. However, there is a wide gap between the readiness of boys and girls. Just over half the boys in the current Year 1 class were as well prepared as the girls.
- In Year 1 most pupils achieve the expected standard in the phonics check (letters and the sounds they make). This is because the teaching of early reading skills is good.
- As a result of good and some outstanding teaching, pupils achieve well by the end of Year 2 in reading, writing and mathematics. They reach standards that are well above the national average.
- By the end of Key Stage 2, pupils' attainment is consistently above the national average in reading, writing and mathematics. School leaders have taken decisive action to improve progress in mathematics. Progress in reading and writing is not as strong.
- Pupils behave very well in lessons and around the school. They feel safe and have a good understanding of what bullying behaviour is. They say that bullying rarely occurs. They are confident that adults will sort out any issues that may arise. Pupils enjoy school and love learning which can be seen from their high attendance rates.
- The school has devised a curriculum that is broad and balanced. It provides interesting and stimulating learning experiences for pupils. School leaders call this the 'Burford Curriculum'. Pupils talked with enthusiasm about their learning and know the next steps they are expected to achieve because their targets are easily accessible and regularly checked.
- The school provides rich and varied experiences for pupils which support their personal development extremely well. A wide range of extra-curricular activities take place, including sports, drama and musical activities. A number of pupils learn musical instruments and there is a thriving choir. Pupils sang beautifully during a rehearsal for a performance, which is soon to take place at the Royal Albert Hall, along with pupils from schools across the country.

Next steps for the school

Leaders and governors should ensure that:

- school self-evaluation is carried out with greater rigour, so that school improvement planning is more sharply focused on increasing rates of progress for all groups of pupils, particularly in writing

- the role of subject leaders and other middle leaders is developed further to:
 - make more effective use of information on pupils' achievement to plan improvements in their area of responsibility
 - ensure that their monitoring focuses rigorously on increasing rates of pupils' progress.

Yours sincerely

Ann Henderson
Her Majesty's Inspector

Information about the inspection

- During the inspection, meetings were held with you, your deputy headteacher, three governors, including the Chair of Governors, two middle leaders and a group of pupils.
- A range of documents were looked at, including information on pupils' achievement, the school self-evaluation and school improvement plan and external reports. Documentation relating to safeguarding was checked. Pupils' work was looked at.
- A walk around the school to check on aspects of the curriculum and pupils' learning was carried out. Informal discussions with pupils took place during lunchtime.
- The views of parents were considered through the 192 responses to Ofsted's online questionnaire, Parent View. The views of staff were also taken into account from the 36 staff questionnaire responses.