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13 November 2017

Mr Edward Gregory  
Headteacher  
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Henderson Close  
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Dear Mr Gregory

**Short inspection of Bishop Henderson Church of England Primary School, Taunton**

Following my visit to the school on 31 October 2017, 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 May 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 high aspirations for the school which are shared by a team of skilled leaders and a well-informed and proactive governing body. Bishop Henderson Primary School is proud of its ethos of inclusivity and it was clear from my visit that leaders have an in-depth knowledge of their pupils. Across the school, there is an expectation that all pupils will achieve their potential regardless of background, prior attainment or additional need. This underpins the school's drive for further improvement and is leading to raised outcomes for all pupils.

The school clearly values its partnership with parents and has put in place a number of initiatives to develop home/school links. For example, early years parents are given the opportunity to work alongside their children at the start of each day. This is proving effective in supporting parents in becoming active participants in their children's learning. Nearly all of the parents who responded to Ofsted's online questionnaire would recommend the school. One parent, who summed up the view of many, wrote, 'Bishop Henderson is a lovely school with a very friendly, family atmosphere.' Another wrote, 'Not only are my children happy, they are thriving academically, socially and emotionally.'

The previous inspection identified the need for leaders to further raise the quality of teaching, learning and assessment across the school. Leaders' rigorous monitoring

is ensuring that they have an accurate and thorough understanding of where teaching is strongest and where additional support is required. You have introduced a programme where teachers support each other in their professional development. This is providing opportunities for teachers to share best practice from across all phases of the school and is developing subject knowledge, confidence and expertise.

Another aspect for development was to ensure that the progress being made by pupils is consistent across all year groups. Embedding a consistent approach to teaching, learning and assessment and, consequently, pupils' outcomes has been a key focus for the school. You have provided opportunities for year group teams to plan and assess collaboratively and introduced regular whole school moderations of pupils' work. This has raised expectation and teachers now have a shared understanding of what pupils are capable of achieving. Inspection evidence, including visits to classrooms and scrutinies of work in pupils' books, demonstrates that pupils across the school are making strong progress from their different starting points.

### **Safeguarding is effective.**

Leaders and governors place a high priority on all aspects of safeguarding and this is ensuring that arrangements are fit for purpose. Thorough checks are made to ensure that all staff and volunteers are suitable to work with children. These are routinely monitored by governors to confirm adherence to school policy and statutory guidance.

Together with the designated safeguarding lead, you promote a strong culture of vigilance. Staff and governors receive regular training to ensure that they have an up-to-date understanding of the vulnerabilities faced by pupils. You have established strong relationships with a range of professionals and external agencies. However, you are not afraid to provide challenge when the service they provide falls short of your high expectations.

Pupils told me that they are well looked after in school. They say that bullying rarely happens but know that there is always a trusted adult they can talk to if they have any concerns. Nearly all parents who completed the online questionnaire stated that their children are happy and safe in school.

### **Inspection findings**

- At the start of the inspection, we agreed the main areas we would focus on. Firstly, we looked at the impact that leaders' actions are having on raising rates of progress for boys in reading and writing so that they are more in line with the strong progress being made by girls. In the 2017 national tests at the end of Year 6, boys' progress was in line with pupils nationally. However, within the school, published assessment information showed that, from their key stage 1 starting points, boys had made less progress than girls, whose progress was above that found nationally.

- Through your detailed analysis of assessment information, leaders and governors have already identified this as an area for development. The school's provision has been reviewed and, where improvements were needed, these have been implemented quickly and effectively. Leaders and governors are able to talk in great depth about how both teaching and the curriculum have been adapted to inspire boys, while at the same time ensuring that girls continue to benefit from the school's high-quality provision. The school's broad curriculum is providing pupils with opportunities to write in a range of genres, including graphic novels, and across a range of subjects. This is giving their writing a sense of purpose.
- Work in books shows that boys are making progress from their starting points. However, we agreed that, in some year groups, teachers' planning lacks precision and the success criteria that are linked to activities are not aligned closely enough with national curriculum expectations. As a result, although pupils are making progress from their starting points, this is not always at the rate required for them to demonstrate that they are working at, or above, the level expected for their age.
- Boys that I heard read exhibited levels of comprehension which were at least in line with expectations for their age. They talked enthusiastically about reading and the support that the school is providing to further develop their skills.
- In 2017, the proportion of high prior-attaining pupils who achieved the higher standard in the national mathematics tests at key stage 2 was slightly below the national average. At key stage 1, teacher assessments also showed that the proportion of pupils working at greater depth was below national comparators. Therefore, our next line of enquiry was to explore the effectiveness of leaders' actions to increase the number of pupils working at greater depth in mathematics.
- This area has already been identified as a priority for the school and is a key focus in the school's plan for further improvement. Work in pupils' books demonstrates that pupils of all abilities are provided with regular opportunities to apply their understanding of mathematical concepts. However, we agreed that the impact this is having on deepening pupils' understanding is variable across different year groups. The leader responsible for mathematics has a good understanding of the improvements that still need to be made in securing teachers' understanding of a 'mastery' curriculum. Once embedded, these will lead to greater numbers of pupils working at levels above those expected for their age.
- Our next line of enquiry was to explore how leaders are ensuring that pupils who have special educational needs (SEN) and/or disabilities make the progress they are capable of. I was particularly interested in those pupils with prior attainment in line with that expected for their age.
- Through our discussions, it was clear that leaders have an in-depth understanding of these pupils and the barriers they face in their academic work. This was particularly evident for those pupils identified as having additional social, emotional and mental health needs. Leaders and staff ensure that, as much as possible, provision is tailored to meet pupils' individual needs. Staff are willing to be innovative, adaptable and flexible in order to achieve this. In the

majority of cases, this is reducing barriers to pupils' learning. Work in books shows that, once these are removed, pupils make progress which is at least comparable to their peers.

- Overall, pupils' attendance has been consistently above the national average. However, in 2016, the proportion of disadvantaged pupils and those who have SEN and/or disabilities who were regularly absent from school was above the levels found nationally. Therefore, our final line of enquiry was regarding leaders' actions to improve the attendance of the school's most vulnerable learners. Leaders and governors know their families well and continue to work hard to reduce absence rates for these pupils. A wide range of strategies have been put in place, including the engagement of external agencies. In the majority of cases, attendance is increasing. However, absence levels for these groups of pupils remain above the national averages.

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

Leaders and those responsible for governance should ensure that:

- in writing, teachers' planning is more closely aligned to national curriculum expectations for each year group
- in all year groups, teachers provide pupils with a wide range of opportunities to deepen their mathematical understanding
- attendance rates for disadvantaged pupils and those who have SEN and/or disabilities continue to rise so that they are at least in line with national averages.

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

Yours sincerely

Jonathan Dyer  
**Her Majesty's Inspector**

### **Information about the inspection**

During the inspection, I met with you and other members of your senior leadership team. We discussed the school's self-evaluation, information about pupils' progress and improvements made since the previous inspection. Together with yourself, I observed pupils in classrooms and spoke to them about their learning. We analysed work in pupils' books from across the curriculum and I also heard a number of pupils read.

I had meetings with senior leaders and eight governors, including the chair of governors. I also had a telephone conversation with an officer from the local

authority. I looked at a range of written evidence, including documents relating to safeguarding and attendance. I took account of the views expressed by 115 parents who completed the online survey as well as their written comments.