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Mrs Lysa Upham
Headteacher
East Bierley Church of England Voluntary Controlled Primary School
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Dear Mrs Upham

Short inspection of East Bierley Church of England Voluntary Controlled Primary School

Following my visit to the school on 27 March 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 June 2013.

This school continues to be good.

The leadership team has maintained the good quality of education in the school since the last inspection. Since your appointment as headteacher in January 2016, there have been considerable changes in leadership and staffing and an increase in pupil numbers. You lead the school with ambition, commitment and determination. Your clear vision of 'an inclusive school where pupils are happy, flourish and can be the best they can be' is shared by all staff and governors. This, combined with your strong drive for improvement, has ensured that the school has improved quickly, following a dip in its performance since the previous inspection.

The school is proud of its Christian ethos and has strong links with the local church. Pupils understand the school's core values of 'friendship, forgiveness, trust, courage and respect'. Pupils say that they feel happy in school and enjoy their learning. They attend regularly. Pupils behave well and want to make progress. Parents are overwhelmingly supportive of the school and recognise the difference you have made since your appointment. As one parent told me: 'This is a lovely school. The headteacher has made such a difference since she joined.'

You have an accurate understanding of what the school does well, and where the school needs to improve. Senior leaders are effective, and they support teachers well in classrooms. You have increased the rigour of your checks to ensure that the quality of teaching is consistently strong. You have acted decisively to make sure that any weaker teaching is quickly addressed. All members of staff who completed Ofsted's online questionnaire say that they are proud to work in the school and that

the school has improved since the last inspection.

At the time of the last inspection, the school was asked to raise pupils' attainment in mathematics. In 2017, at the end of key stage 2, pupils' attainment in mathematics was average at the expected standard and above average at the higher standard. In 2017, at the end of key stage 1, pupils' attainment in mathematics was below national averages. You have quite rightly identified that middle-ability pupils in key stage 1 could make better progress, and have begun work to address this.

Inspectors also asked the school to raise attainment in writing. You and your team were disappointed with attainment in writing at the end of key stage 2 in 2017, and have taken action. Pupils are now making better progress in writing. However, you agree that more work is required to ensure that pupils' handwriting and presentation are of a consistently high standard. Since your appointment as headteacher, you have taken action to drive improvements in mathematics and writing. You are working determinedly on the right aspects for improvement.

There have been significant changes to the governing body since the last inspection, including the appointment of a new chair of the governing body. Governors have quickly gained an accurate view of what is working well and what could be better still, and are fully committed to the success of the school. Through regular visits, they assure themselves that pupils are well cared for, safe and now achieving well. They offer a healthy balance of challenge and support to you and your team.

Safeguarding is effective.

The leadership team has ensured that all safeguarding arrangements are fit for purpose. You have ensured that staff and governors receive appropriate training in child protection, and you and your team ensure that you carry out appropriate checks on the suitability of all staff who work with pupils. Staff know that safeguarding is everyone's responsibility. You have made sure that all staff know the school's systems and procedures well. They are in no doubt about what action the school expects them to take should they have any concerns.

Pupils say that they feel safe in school. Pupils say that there is rarely any bullying, but if it does happen, they are confident that teachers and leaders will tackle it quickly. Pupils know who to go to if they have any concerns, and are confident that staff will deal effectively with any problems. Pupils enthusiastically told me about your 'School Ambassadors', and say that 'these are pupils who are always available to listen and try to help us'. Pupils understand how to keep safe on the internet. Every parent who completed Ofsted's online questionnaire, Parent View, agreed that the school keeps pupils safe.

Inspection findings

- At the start of my visit, we agreed a number of key lines of enquiry for the inspection. My first key line of enquiry was to explore how effectively leaders are improving progress in reading of the most able pupils at the end of key stage 2.

This was because, in 2017, the most able pupils made weaker progress than other pupils.

- Pupils, including the most able pupils, read accurately and fluently. You have changed the way reading comprehension is taught across the school. Guided reading sessions take place each day. Pupils read challenging texts, and use these to answer a range of questions which develop their reading skills well. Inference is promoted well, and the development of pupils' vocabulary features highly in lessons. For example, in one lesson we visited, pupils confidently defined the meaning of the words 'sumptuous' and 'elaborately'.
- Throughout the school, pupils are enthusiastic about reading. You have successfully developed a love of reading. Pupils enthusiastically told me about 'Drop everything and read' time, when all pupils and adults in school spend time reading. Pupils also told me about the reading areas in each classroom, and they appreciate the variety of books on offer to them. Pupils, including the most able, are making good progress in reading.
- My second key line of enquiry, and a key area for improvement in the school's development plan, was the progress that pupils make in writing across key stage 2. Careful tracking of pupils' progress has successfully identified any gaps in learning, and this has supported teachers in planning work which is well matched to pupils' needs. Staff training and working with other schools have also been effective in increasing the accuracy of teachers' assessment.
- A school-wide focus on grammar and spelling is already having a positive impact on pupils' writing. Teachers enable pupils to develop their understanding of grammatical features, and routinely encourage them to use these in their writing. You have recently introduced a new approach to spelling, which is paying dividends. Pupils are also given opportunities to apply their skills by writing at length in a range of other subjects, including history and science. You agreed that, in some classes, pupils' handwriting and presentation could be further improved.
- I also explored how effectively leaders are addressing the weaker progress of middle-ability pupils in mathematics at the end of key stage 1. This is because, in 2017, middle-ability pupils made weaker progress in mathematics than in reading and writing. Teachers ensure that appropriate apparatus and practical materials help pupils understand mathematical concepts effectively. Recent whole-school training, led by the mathematics leader, has resulted in teachers providing more opportunities for pupils to apply their skills through reasoning. However, our visits to classrooms, and work in pupils' books, showed that, on occasions, teachers in key stage 1 do not always move pupils on soon enough and give them opportunities to apply their skills through reasoning.
- My final focus was the effectiveness of the teaching of phonics in key stage 1. The teaching of phonics is good. You have developed tighter tracking, with more precise targets for pupils' progress. You quickly identify those pupils who are falling behind, working with teachers to plan how to address gaps in pupils' learning.

Next steps for the school

Leaders and those responsible for governance should ensure that:

- teachers more regularly check the progress that pupils are making in mathematics, and move them onto more challenging reasoning problems sooner, especially in key stage 1
- pupils' presentation and handwriting are of a consistently high standard in all classes.

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

Yours sincerely

Mark Randall
Ofsted Inspector

Information about the inspection

During the inspection, I met with you, your two assistant headteachers, the mathematics subject leader, five parents, seven members of the governing body, including the chair, and a representative from the local authority. I talked with small groups of pupils informally in lessons and during lunchtime. Along with you, I visited all classes. I looked at current English and mathematics books. I also listened to some pupils read in classes.

I examined a range of documentation, including documents relating to attendance and safeguarding. I took account of the minutes of the governing body meetings, the school's evaluation of how well it is doing and the school's improvement plan. I reviewed the school's website. As part of the inspection, I considered the 48 responses from parents to Ofsted's online questionnaire, Parent View. I also considered 18 responses to the staff questionnaire.