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8 June 2018

Mr Christian Hilton
Executive Headteacher
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Lower Brailes
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Dear Mr Hilton

Short inspection of Brailes Church of England Primary School

Following my visit to the school on 22 May 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 October 2014.

This school continues to be good.

The leadership team has maintained the good quality of education in the school since the last inspection.

The school became part of the Stour Federation Partnership in September 2015. It is partnered with two local primary schools, Shipston-on-Stour and Acorns primary schools. You are executive headteacher of the three schools and you are well supported by an associate headteacher in each school. You have formed a strong and effective alliance between each school. This has significantly enhanced the professional development of staff at Brailes and extended the range of opportunities offered to pupils. For example, pupils now take part in more inter-school sports tournaments and music events. A nursery has been added to improve early years education, and a breakfast club provides a valuable resource for parents and carers and their children. These initiatives, driven formidably by governors, have successfully helped reduce the budget deficit, increase pupil numbers and aid the sustainability and success of the school.

You ensure that the Christian ethos of the school underpins pupils' respect and tolerance for staff and for their peers. Pupils are polite, courteous and well behaved. They mix happily with pupils from other year groups and few seem troubled by the age gap between themselves and other pupils in their mixed-age classes. Good-quality care and nurture are the order of the day. Staff have a detailed understanding of individual pupils' needs, and relationships between staff and pupils are positive. As a result, pupils are happy, settled and achieve well.

You have addressed the areas identified as needing improvement from the previous inspection. Teachers have high expectations of what their pupils can do and the quality and quantity of pupils' writing have improved across the school. Professional development is strongly promoted and there is good liaison between the schools in the partnership to share good practice. However, further work is needed to accelerate the progress of pupils who have special educational needs (SEN) and or/disabilities, develop pupils' reasoning skills in mathematics, and improve pupils' use of grammar, spelling and punctuation across the curriculum.

Parents and pupils have very positive views of the school. Parents appreciate and value the support their children receive. A typical comment from a parent was, 'This is a nurturing school with a great sense of family, which has given my children a fantastic start in their education.' Views represented in the Parent View survey were also hugely positive, with the very large majority saying that they would recommend the school to other parents and that their children feel safe and make good progress.

Safeguarding is effective.

You have created a strong culture of safeguarding within the school. All staff receive training so that they know precisely what to do if they have a concern about a child. Swift referrals are made to the local authority when you, or the associate headteacher, feel additional guidance or support is needed. Together you are relentless in your pursuit of this support. Record keeping is highly systematic. Incidents are diligently logged in order of chronology and actions taken are recorded clearly and appropriately. Notices placed in staff areas serve as a constant reminder to staff to be vigilant, listen to children and report their concerns.

Pupils feel very safe at school. They have a good knowledge of different forms of bullying but say that this is rare at their school. They understand the dangers associated with the internet as e-safety is taught effectively. Assemblies, visitors and projects such as 'all about me' and 'no outsiders' promote a clear message about keeping safe. Pupils can articulate the steps they take if they are made to feel uncomfortable by someone: 'I say "no" in a friendly way, then "no" in a firm way, then I tell an adult.'

Inspection findings

- You, your governors and the leadership team have evaluated the school's current position accurately and honestly. Together you have identified areas of strength and some aspects that need further development. Robust plans have been devised to bring about improvement. You have capitalised on having a wider leadership team by utilising the knowledgeable and experienced subject leaders from within the partnership, to provide effective support in reading, writing and mathematics at Brailes. These leaders visit the school regularly and are fully involved in monitoring and supporting teaching staff. They analyse data, lead initiatives and work directly with pupil groups to help raise standards in the core subjects.

- Leadership of SEN is effective. The leader has a clear understanding of pupils' individual needs. Pupils are identified early through observation, discussion with parents and tracking of pupils' progress. External agency support is accessed where a pupil has a specific need, for example, medical or speech and language difficulties. Although there are only small numbers of pupils in the school, there is a significant number with SEN. The leader provides individual support when not class based. However, due to limited resources and lack of tailored individual provision, too few SEN pupils make good progress or reach the levels expected by the end of Year 2 and Year 6. Further work and support are therefore needed with this group of pupils.
- Governors are dedicated and passionate in their quest to provide the very best education possible for pupils. They are not afraid to make difficult decisions and fight for what they believe is right for the school. Initiatives include opening the nursery and breakfast club, and joining the Stour Federation Partnership to extend and improve the quality of leadership and teaching. As a result, there is clear impact in terms of dispersed leadership, effective teaching, improved early years provision, rising numbers on roll and a more stable budget position. Governors provide a good balance of challenge and support. They are proactive in their roles. They visit the school regularly, work with pupils and assist with school trips. As a result, they have a clear and well-informed knowledge of how well the school is doing.
- The opening of a school nursery has helped strengthen and extend early years provision. Children settle quickly in Nursery and good use is made of both the outdoor and indoor learning environments. All areas of the early years curriculum are covered comprehensively and photographic evidence of activities in children's learning journeys help depict the good progress children make. The majority of children join the school showing skills, knowledge and understanding typical for their age. However, there are some who have weaker skills, especially in reading and mathematics. Effective teaching ensures that children catch up, and there is a three-year rising trend in attainment at the end of Reception Year. In 2018, attainment is on track to be above the national average.
- Phonics is taught well and most pupils reach the levels expected in the Year 1 screening check. Good support is provided for pupils who do not achieve the standard required and as a result, pupils reach the level expected by the end of Year 2. Pupils read regularly and from a good range of books which are set at the right levels of ability. Pupils' writing has improved. A clear process of drafting, editing and publishing has been established. Work in pupils' books shows evidence of higher quality and quantity of pupils' writing. However, while good attention is paid to content and structure of writing, adults do not address weaknesses in pupils' use of grammar, punctuation and spelling systematically enough, especially in topic and mathematics books.
- Standards at the end of Year 2 fluctuate due to the disproportionate impact of small cohort numbers on data. In 2017, standards were below the national average in reading, writing and mathematics. You and your governors have identified that inconsistent teaching, together with difficulties presented by small cohorts, and having to mix key stages together, contributed to these lower results. You have taken effective action to improve teaching and monitor pupils'

progress carefully. Teachers' assessments for 2018 indicate that standards are rising in reading and writing and are on track to be above the national average. Mathematics standards are assessed as being similar to those in 2017. However, you have secured funding to ensure that Year 1 and Year 2 pupils will be taught together next year and thus eradicate the need to bridge two key stages.

- Teachers plan lessons that build on pupils' previous knowledge and skills well. They regularly check pupils' levels of understanding and explain tasks clearly. Increasing levels of problem solving are incorporated into mathematics. Good application of different mathematical skills and links to real life are also planned. For example, Year 2 and Year 3 pupils applied their knowledge of fractions, angles and direction to rotate shapes to a given position, and Year 6 pupils worked out the maximum profit for a company based on different scenarios. However, pupils' ability to explain and provide reasons for their answers is still underdeveloped. This hinders the numbers of pupils, especially the most able, to demonstrate that they are working at greater depth. Initiatives introduced, such as online homework, are, however, having a positive impact on outcomes. The progress of all groups, including the most able, is accelerating.

Next steps for the school

Leaders and those responsible for governance should ensure that teaching:

- provides carefully tailored support for pupils who have SEN in order to accelerate their progress
- further develops pupils' reasoning skills in mathematics so that a greater proportion work at greater depth, including in early years
- focuses on pupils' use of grammar, punctuation and spelling across the curriculum.

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

Yours sincerely

Heather Simpson
Her Majesty's Inspector

Information about the inspection

During the inspection, I met with you, the associate headteacher, members of your governing body and core subject leaders from across the federation. I discussed the work of the school with you, including the processes and procedures in place for safeguarding. I visited all classrooms, spoke with pupils about their learning and

looked at the work in their books. I listened to pupils read and talked to pupils to gather their views about the school.

I looked at a range of school documents, including the school's information about pupils' achievement. I also reviewed the school's own evaluation of its work, together with the school development plan. I took account of the 40 responses to Ofsted's online questionnaire, Parent View and the school's own parent survey. Additional information was collected from parents at the end of the school day. There were four responses to the staff questionnaire. Their views were fully considered.