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Mrs Bethan Foister
Headteacher
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Dear Mrs Foister

Short inspection of Oakhill Church School

Following my visit to the school on 8 February 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 your predecessor school was judged to be good in September 2014.

This school continues to be good.

The leadership team has maintained the good quality of education in the school since the last inspection of the predecessor school. The school became an academy in March 2015 and joined Bath and Wells Multi-Academy Trust (the trust). This has enhanced your ability to share your experiences across the trust's schools and provide staff with a wide range of training and leadership coaching.

There have been a number of staffing changes since the school became an academy, including the appointment of a new deputy headteacher. Two teachers have joined the school. In 2017, you were seconded to another school in the trust and your deputy headteacher, supported by trust leaders, oversaw the school's work. The change in leadership provided some challenges. Parents and carers comment on poorer communication at this time. You are working to remedy this, although you, and the trust, recognise there is more to do.

Pupils are enthusiastic about their learning. They comment on the range of subjects that they cover and the opportunities that are provided to explore their understanding. For example, Year 5 pupils were conscientiously conducting scientific experiments to understand how and why solids dissolve. Younger pupils were particularly keen to explain their knowledge of the animals of the African savannah.

Safeguarding is effective.

Staff are suitably trained and alert to the indicators of harm. Training and briefings from the trust's safeguarding leader are particularly helpful in keeping staff up to date with the specific risks that are being seen in the local area.

Leaders are swift to take action when children or their families need protection. The school makes good use of 'early help' to ensure that those families who need help receive it. The leadership team has ensured that all safeguarding arrangements are fit for purpose and records are well maintained.

Pupils are safe. Pupils and the majority of parents who responded to Parent View report the school to be a safe place. However, a few parents are concerned about bullying and how well it is dealt with. A small number of parents are also concerned that when they do have cause to complain it is not fully dealt with.

Inspection findings

- My first line of enquiry focused on the design of the early years curriculum. I was interested to explore how it was engaging the boys and ensuring that they make good progress. While the proportion of children in Reception who have a good level of development has increased since the school became an academy, the girls have outshone the boys.
- School leaders, supported by the trust's early years leader, have reformed the curriculum in Reception. This has had a particular focus on developing pupils' creativity and writing, especially the boys. Leaders have been effective in raising the level of challenge when pupils choose their own learning activities. Taught sessions are used effectively to help the children develop their reading and writing skills well. The multi-sensory approach that teaching staff use has been successful in helping the boys to make strong progress in their reading and writing. As a result, the children are confident in writing their own names and use their knowledge of phonics to write phonetically plausible sentences.
- When children do fall behind, your staff are swift to put in additional support so that any misconceptions are tackled at an early stage. Parents who responded to Parent View commented positively about the progress their children make and the good relationships they have with teaching staff in Reception.
- The proportion of children on track to reach a good level of development is high and above the level typically seen nationally.
- My second area of interest focused on the impact of leaders' actions to improve the quality of pupils' mathematics skills in key stage 2, particularly that of the girls. Progress at the end of key stage 2 fell in 2017 and was below the national average. You have analysed the reasons for this and identified a group of girls who did not achieve as highly as they should.
- You have reviewed the school's approach to mathematics. Recent work by teachers to improve the sequencing of learning activities and help pupils connect different aspects of mathematics is beginning to bear fruit. You are actively

engaging in a trust-wide project to upskill teachers in their planning of learning in mathematics in order to raise standards. I found pupils' calculation skills to be well developed. There is some improvement in their application of their mathematics skills, but it is early days and is stronger in some classes than others. Overall, the proportion of pupils in each year group who are on track to reach the standard expected for their age is increasing. There is still more to do to ensure that the most able mathematicians achieve the higher standards.

- Finally, I looked at pupils' ability to apply their spelling, punctuation and grammar in their writing. This was no surprise to you and is clearly identified as a priority in the school improvement plan.
- In all classes, teachers plan learning so that pupils have the opportunity to write often and in a wide range of styles. Pupils' grammar is generally strong. Pupils find correcting their own, or their classmates', work to be helpful in improving their own spelling and punctuation. The recently introduced spelling scheme is in place but its implementation is too inconsistent across the school. Consequently, the benefits are not yet being seen and pupils' spelling is not as good as it needs to be.
- Too frequently, pupils misuse capital letters and spell words incorrectly. They do not have the depth of understanding to be able to apply prefixes and suffixes with confidence and accuracy. Although pupils know about a wide range of punctuation devices, they are not confident or accurate in applying these. You recognise there is more work to do to improve the quality of teaching with respect to pupils' accurate use of punctuation. This is often less strong in their enquiry books, where they record their findings of subjects such as science, geography and history.
- You acknowledge that there is more work to do with parents, so they are better advised about the work their children are doing in English and the progress they are making.

Next steps for the school

Leaders and those responsible for governance should ensure that:

- teachers develop key stage 2 pupils' understanding of the mathematics they study, so that they can confidently apply their knowledge and solve problems efficiently
- work continues to improve further the accuracy of pupils' spelling and punctuation
- communication with parents improves, so that parents are clearer about what their children are learning, the progress that they make and how the school is responding to their concerns.

I am copying this letter to the chair of the board of trustees, the chief executive officer of the multi-academy trust, 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

Iain Freeland
Her Majesty's Inspector

Information about the inspection

During the inspection, you joined me in observing learning and looking at pupils' work. I also looked at work with your deputy headteacher and the trust's assistant director of learning and achievement. I spoke with pupils in lessons and at the start of the school day. I met with you, your deputy headteacher and the trust's assistant director of learning and achievement, as well as with your Reception class teacher. I met with three directors of the trust and one member of the local governing body.

I scrutinised a wide range of documentation, including the school's own self-evaluation and development plan, assessment information and safeguarding records. I spoke with parents at the start of the school day and considered the views of 41 parents who responded to Parent View.