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Mrs Anne Radford
Executive Headteacher
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Dear Mrs Radford

Short inspection of Buxted CofE Primary School

Following my visit to the school on 17 January 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 March 2014.

The school continues to be good.

The leadership team has maintained the good quality of education since the last inspection. Buxted CofE Primary school is a warm, welcoming and aspirational place. The mission statement of 'inspire and aspire' is threaded throughout the life of the school and has a wholly positive impact on pupils and staff alike. Everyone understands and embraces the high standards that you and the head of school promote and, as a result, levels of attainment are high.

Parents and pupils are full of praise for the teachers, leaders and support staff. Pupils enjoy coming to school, and all who expressed an opinion said that they would recommend it to a friend. The overwhelming majority of parents are positive about the school. One parent said: 'We have been really pleased with the experiences both of our children have had at the school. Superb caring ethos and excellent academic achievement – exactly what you'd hope for in a local school.' Several parents spoke enthusiastically about how well the school had prepared their children to thrive at secondary school.

Pupils are friendly to adults and other pupils alike. They are polite and well mannered, regularly opening doors for people and offering a cheery greeting. Leaders offer many opportunities for pupils to take responsibility, which they seize enthusiastically. The youngest children are well supported by a buddy system in which older pupils take pleasure in looking after them. This helps children new to the school to feel safe, settled and valued.

Leaders offer opportunities for teachers to develop their skills and take on new responsibilities at every stage of their career. This creates an ethos where everyone understands that they have something to offer. Governors know the school well and are effective because they share a great sense of ambition and challenge. They have recruited people with the right mixture of skills and this allows them to carry out their work confidently and capably.

At the previous inspection, leaders were asked to improve the quality of teaching. Inspectors particularly asked leaders to make sure that lessons sparked pupils' curiosity and provided them with opportunities to move onto more challenging work. You have addressed this effectively. Pupils work hard in lessons because there is a range of interesting activities to help them learn well. They enjoy challenging themselves and moving quickly onto harder work as soon as they are confident that they are ready. Teachers plan activities that bring learning to life for pupils. For example, in a mathematics lesson about area, we saw pupils completely absorbed in designing a zoo, having been given clear guidance about the size of enclosures that each animal would need. Almost all teaching engages pupils' interest so that they concentrate and take pride in their achievements.

Safeguarding is effective.

Pupils are safe in school because leaders and governors ensure that all staff understand and embrace their responsibility for safeguarding pupils. Staff receive regular training and updates so that there is a clear, shared understanding about the signs that may raise concerns about a pupil's welfare. Staff are very clear about exactly what to do if they have any worries that a pupil may be at risk of harm and take action promptly when necessary. Senior leaders engage effectively with external agencies to secure pupils' well-being whenever the need arises.

Older pupils take care of younger ones, and this creates a strong feeling of well-being and security in all pupils. Pupils are very clear that bullying is rare in the school, although they say pupils do fall out occasionally. They have great confidence in staff to deal with incidents quickly and effectively as they arise.

The school's policies, procedures and protocols are thorough, detailed and up to date. Leaders ensure that the right checks are carried out before a person can work in the school. Governors visit the school regularly to verify that the records of these checks are thorough and accurate. Governors take their responsibility for safeguarding pupils seriously. They respond quickly to any advice that they receive about how to further improve safeguarding practice in the school.

Inspection findings

- The first area that we agreed to explore was how well teaching in key stage 1 builds on the strong start that pupils receive in the early years. We looked in particular at boys and pupils of middle ability, because these pupils did not achieve as well as similar pupils nationally in 2017. Leaders have made changes

to the curriculum so that it provides interesting lessons and learning experiences for boys. Many of the topics now feature subjects that excite boys' interest and curiosity. Furthermore, leaders have ensured that the library is welcoming to boys and that there is a wide selection of books to ignite boys' interest in reading.

- Leaders have worked hard to understand the reasons for boys' lower levels of attainment at the end of key stage 1 and can point to convincing reasons why this group made slower progress. Plans are in place to ensure that pupils who did not make enough progress receive the right level of support to make better progress in key stage 2. Work in pupils' books shows that boys and pupils with middle ability currently in key stage 1 and Year 3 are making good progress and achieving well across the curriculum. However, occasionally, written work is not as neat as it should be because some teachers do not insist on the best presentation and handwriting.
- Second, we agreed to look at how effectively leaders use the pupil premium to enable the most able disadvantaged pupils to achieve the higher standards of which they are capable. In 2017, proportions of disadvantaged pupils who achieved the expected standards in reading, writing and mathematics at the end of key stages 1 and 2 were broadly in line with national figures. However, no disadvantaged pupils went on to achieve the higher standards in any subject. Most disadvantaged pupils currently in school are making good progress. However, too few are making the more rapid progress needed to enable them to achieve the higher standards.
- Disadvantaged pupils do not receive a high enough profile in the school's self-evaluation and development planning. Leaders and governors do not take into account the research available to inform their spending of the pupil premium and do not systematically evaluate the effectiveness of how they use the funding.
- Third, we looked at the wider curriculum to investigate how well it enables pupils to achieve highly in subjects other than English and mathematics. The curriculum is rich and varied and inspires pupils to learn well. This was evident in the many pupils' books that we looked through and in the high-quality displays of pupils' work throughout the school. The school's many strengths include science, which receives in-depth coverage, computing and art. Pupils develop skills in using a wide range of media and produce work of considerable quality.
- Middle leaders have a clear understanding of how well their subject is covered in the school and have plans in place to accelerate pupils' progress in their curriculum areas. They receive strong and effective support to fulfil their responsibilities in the school. Leaders have started to track the progress of pupils in some subjects other than English and mathematics and this is helping them to evaluate the impact of teaching across the curriculum.
- Finally, we agreed to investigate how effective leaders' actions have been to improve the attendance of disadvantaged pupils. Although there are relatively few disadvantaged pupils in school, their attendance has been too low in recent years. You have worked hard to raise the attendance of these pupils and have clear evidence of the impact of your work. This year, the difference between the

attendance of disadvantaged pupils and other pupils in school has diminished markedly.

Next steps for the school

Leaders and those responsible for governance should ensure that:

- the pupil premium funding is used more effectively to ensure that a greater proportion of disadvantaged pupils achieve the higher standards of which they are capable
- all teachers have the same high expectations of pupils, including for the presentation of pupils' written work.

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

Yours sincerely

Bruce Waelend
Ofsted Inspector

Information about the inspection

I met with you and the head of school, other leaders and five members of the governing body. I spoke with representatives of the local authority and the diocese on the telephone. I visited all classes in the school with you and the head of school to look at teaching and learning. Together we looked at pupils' work during classroom visits. I met with a group of three middle leaders. I observed pupils' behaviour around the school and had a meeting with a group of pupils. I considered seven responses to the staff survey, 38 responses to the pupil survey and 58 responses to Ofsted's online questionnaire, Parent View, as well as speaking to several parents at the beginning of the day. I evaluated a range of documents, including the school's self-evaluation documents, the school's pupil-tracking information and the school's development plan. I looked closely at the school's safeguarding policies, procedures and checks.