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Mrs Linda Jeffcutt
Headteacher
Blockley Church of England Primary School
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Dear Mrs Jeffcutt

Short inspection of Blockley Church of England Primary School

Following my visit to the school on 10 February 2016, 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 2010.

This school continues to be good.

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

Your strong leadership has created a united team that ensures that everyone works together very well for the benefit of pupils. Your dedication and passion to provide the very best education shines through. It is no surprise that you are very well respected by parents and those you work with. Pupils speak highly about your leadership and say how much they enjoy attending school and learning about the world.

As you move towards retirement later this year, you have worked closely with the governing body to ensure that preparations are well in hand for the appointment of your successor.

As a dedicated leader, you provide your staff with good opportunities for their own professional development. You encourage staff to take on additional responsibilities that broaden their experience and enhance their careers. Those in posts of responsibility are well supported. They are ambitious to contribute to the school's success and respond willingly to advice and guidance.

The governing body makes a significant contribution to the smooth running of the school. The Chair of the Governing Body is a very strong advocate for the school.

She has a very clear knowledge and understanding about all aspects of the school's work. She is ably supported by a dedicated team of governors that brings a wealth of expertise and experience to the school. Working together they draw upon a wide breadth of skills when making decisions about the school that ensures that all options are fully considered.

Safeguarding is effective.

The school's safeguarding arrangements ensure that pupils at the school are looked after very well and kept safe. Safeguarding is a very high priority and all staff are fully aware of their role and responsibilities for looking after pupils. All visitors to the school are welcomed by a professional team that ensures that the signing-in process is completed quickly and efficiently. The school grounds are kept secure with appropriate fencing and locked gates. Classrooms are organised well to ensure that they provide safe working areas for pupils to learn.

All staff have completed relevant child protection and safeguarding training. The governing body has recently ratified the school's child protection and safeguarding policy. The policy, which is available on the school's website, provides names and contact phone numbers for the staff and governors with responsibility for overseeing pupils' safety.

The school maintains detailed records of all incidents, including accidents and any incidents of inappropriate behaviour. As a result, most parents are very confident that pupils at the school are looked after well and kept safe.

Staff and governors have completed relevant training to ensure that the school's recruitment procedures are fully in place. Similarly, staff have also completed training about the government's 'Prevent' strategy. This has raised their awareness about the importance of keeping pupils safe from the risk of extreme views.

Inspection findings

- Senior leaders know the school well. They have a good knowledge of the school's strengths and the areas that need strengthening. Working together, leaders and governors have set out an agreed, and suitably ambitious, vision for the school's future development. Their plans highlight the relevant priorities for improvement. They know that pupils' attainment at the end of Key Stage 1 dipped in 2015 and that writing standards need to improve. They are also fully focused on ensuring that all groups of pupils achieve well as they move through the school.

- Standards at the end of Key Stage 2 are consistently above and often significantly higher than the national average. Importantly, leaders are building on their previous successes to tackle those areas deemed in need of strengthening.

- Pupils benefit from a strong and determined teaching team. Teachers have high expectations for the pupils they teach. Teachers plan their lessons carefully to ensure that the activities are matched to pupils' abilities and experiences. Teachers demonstrate strong subject knowledge and are rightly aspirational in expecting pupils to reciprocate by using appropriate subject terminology. For example, in a mixed Years 2, 3 and 4 numeracy lesson, pupils were confidently discussing the terms 'numerator' and 'denominator' when learning about fractions.

- Teaching assistants contribute well during lessons by supporting pupils to achieve their potential. Teachers work closely with teaching assistants to ensure that they are fully engaged in supporting learning in the classrooms. During the inspection, teaching assistants were observed working closely with individuals and small groups of pupils. They work discreetly in the classrooms and this ensures that the teacher is able to focus on the main teaching activity. They act as very good role models, for example demonstrating high-quality handwriting as they record very young pupils' thoughts.

- Pupils behave well in lessons and around the school. In lessons, pupils typically concentrate on the work set and demonstrate positive attitudes to learning. They work well, both individually and in small groups supporting one another. They respond quickly to instructions and no time is lost as different activities are introduced.

- Pupils enjoy school. Attendance levels are high and above average. The curriculum is planned well to engage and interest pupils. Pupils talk excitedly about the many practical activities they have to help them learn. In addition to enjoying developing their literacy and numeracy skills, pupils talk excitedly about learning in other subjects, including art and French. Pupils also benefit from the expanding range of clubs that the school provides. Many of these clubs enable pupils to experience new activities such as archery and karate. The strong focus on providing pupils with many opportunities to engage in sport enhances the curriculum and promotes pupils' awareness about the importance of living a healthy lifestyle. For example, during the inspection, Key Stage 2 pupils represented the school successfully in the county trials for the cross-country running team.

- Middle leaders are increasingly involved in supporting the headteacher to implement the school's improvement priorities. Those new in post receive appropriate professional development that helps ensure that they are confident in their role. Teachers with individual responsibilities have developed their own action plans that support the implementation of the school's overall improvement plan. Although teachers' plans highlight appropriate subject priorities, they do not identify clearly enough how the initiatives will benefit and improve pupils' outcomes.

- Governors are fully committed to the school's continued success. They are suitably ambitious for the school to improve. As a group, they possess a wide range of relevant skills that they use to enhance the school's effectiveness. For example, they manage the school's finances astutely, including monitoring the school's additional pupil premium and sports funding. Their monitoring reports point to the positive impact of the initiatives already introduced that support these aspects of the school's work. However, governors recognise that further effort is required if all the pupils eligible for pupil premium funding are to achieve fully in line with other pupils at the school and nationally. To support this initiative, the governors have identified a member of the governing body to act as a 'pupil premium champion' who will monitor the impact of each initiative on improving the outcomes for this group of pupils.

- A very large majority of the parents who responded to Ofsted's online questionnaire, Parent View, are full of praise for the school. Their replies are almost all very positive, with only a few negative responses that relate to the homework the school provides. The recent introduction of three pupils' progress reports each year ensures that families are informed regularly about their child's development.

Next steps for the school

Leaders and governors should ensure that:

- the initiatives introduced to improve pupils' attainment in writing are successful

- the recent improvement in the teaching of phonics is consolidated and used to improve pupils' outcomes at the end of Key Stage 1

- they monitor the learning and progress of all groups of pupils to ensure that they do well and achieve standards at or above the national average.

I am copying this letter to the Chair of the Governing Body, the Director of Education for the Diocese of Gloucester, the Regional Schools Commissioner and the Director of Children's Services for Gloucestershire County Council. This letter will be published on the Ofsted website.

Yours sincerely

Ken Buxton
Her Majesty's Inspector

Information about the inspection

During the inspection, I met you, your senior teachers and four governors, including the Chair of the Governing Body. I also held telephone conversations with a representative from the local authority and the school's external consultant. During the day, you and I visited every classroom to observe teaching and to see pupils at work. I also met with a group of pupils to discuss their views about the school. In addition, I reviewed information about pupils' progress and other relevant school documentation, including minutes of recent governing body meetings and numerous reports about the school's effectiveness. I also scrutinised a wide range of the school's safeguarding documentation and records. In addition, I considered the responses from 53 parents who completed the Parent View questionnaire.