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Mr Timothy Gurney
Headteacher
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Dear Mr Gurney

Short inspection of Bishops Nympton Primary School

Following my visit to the school on 22 February 2017, 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 May 2013.

This school continues to be good.

The leadership team has maintained the good quality of education in the school since the last inspection. You are committed to improving the school further. To this end, you have embraced opportunities to work with other schools. A good example of this has been your collaboration with a group of other schools working on improving the teaching of writing. Findings from this work are already having an impact in your school. You and your staff are determined to make sure that Bishops Nympton school continues to go from strength to strength.

Children enjoy coming to school and working alongside their friends and their teachers. They say Bishops Nympton is a friendly school, where any concerns are 'quickly sorted out'. They enjoy 'finding things out' and learning new skills in their lessons. Pupils say that, most of the time, their work is 'just right', and makes them think and try hard. Links with the pre-school are developing well and this is providing children with a firm foundation for future learning in the Reception Year.

You and your staff have successfully tackled the recommendations made at the previous inspection. However, you have rightly recognised that there are other aspects of the school's work which also need to improve further. We agreed to make these aspects the focus for this inspection. First, we decided to look at the leadership of teaching and the curriculum – in particular, to focus on the teaching of writing and outcomes for pupils of average ability. We also agreed to look at how well pupils present their work and at the quality of their handwriting. This was because writing and pupils' pride in their work were included in the

recommendations from the previous inspection and are also a prominent feature in your improvement planning.

Second, we agreed to look closely at the impact of provision for pupils who have special educational needs and/or disabilities, including how well this aspect of the school is led. The governing body has also identified this as an area for improvement and you have already taken action to address these concerns. Together we agreed that this inspection would evaluate the impact of these actions.

Lastly, we decided to evaluate the impact of leaders and governors in promoting school improvement, as improving the quality of school planning and self-evaluation had been a recommendation from the previous inspection. We also agreed to include the effectiveness of actions to strengthen the link between the pre-school and the main school as part of this focus.

Safeguarding is effective.

Safeguarding arrangements are rigorous and robust. Policy and practice meet all statutory requirements, including for the safe recruitment of staff and volunteers. Training and support is prompt and of good quality, including the induction of newly appointed members of staff. Adults understand their responsibilities and know how to take action if there are any concerns about children's safety, welfare or well-being. Leaders evaluate the effectiveness of this training to make sure procedures are secure. For example, they use mock case studies and scenarios to check how well staff understand the thresholds for reporting concerns.

Pupils are helped to understand risk, including when online or using mobile devices. Through assemblies and the curriculum, they are helped to learn about keeping themselves safe and healthy. For example, most of the children in Year 6 take part in residential activities, such as a trip to London. Year 6 pupils also learn how to take responsibility for themselves and for others when in different environments, such as on hills and moors. Leaders rightly recognise that ensuring good attendance is important in safeguarding pupils. Although overall attendance is slightly below average, leaders are working with parents and families, and with other agencies, to tackle the reasons why a small number of pupils do not attend as regularly as they could.

Inspection findings

- The quality of pupils' writing is improving. Teachers are now using a more consistent approach to the teaching of writing, and have benefited from collaborative research involving staff from your school. There are also higher expectations of pupils' presentation of their work, including the quality of their handwriting. In Years 5 and 6, pupils are able to apply their skills effectively when writing about their understanding of ideas and concepts in science. Nevertheless, sometimes pupils are not challenged enough to reach higher standards, particularly some older pupils in mixed-aged classes. We agreed that this was more likely to be an issue for some pupils of average ability who 'do

enough' but could be challenged more.

- You have also placed an emphasis on providing feedback to pupils about their work. In many cases, this is helping pupils to understand where they have made mistakes and to pinpoint where their work could be improved. However, at times, teachers provide copious written feedback that has too little impact on learning. You have rightly recognised that sometimes the balance between feedback that makes a difference to learning and the burdens on staff may not always be right. You plan to tackle this by reflecting, as a school, on those aspects of feedback which make the most difference to learning.
- There have been important improvements to the leadership of teaching. For example, teachers receive useful feedback about their practice that helps them to improve. This feedback draws on a range of evidence, including detailed checks on pupils' books. However, while the records of these checks show what teachers do or need to do, they do not always make clear the impact of this on pupils' learning. A good example relates to teachers' marking. While leaders' records seem to show whether books are marked appropriately, it is less clear whether marking is having any impact on pupils' learning.
- Since the last inspection, you have reviewed the provision for pupils who have special educational needs and/or disabilities. You have correctly identified that the support provided for pupils was not always responsive enough to their needs. As a result, a small number of parents had expressed concerns. Over the last 12 months in particular, you have taken specific action to address these issues. The impact and cost-effectiveness of support for pupils is now checked carefully to see if it can be improved. As a result, the progress of pupils who have special educational needs and/or disabilities is improving and pupils are clear that the support they receive from adults helps them to improve their work.
- Governors are making an effective contribution to school improvement. In particular, they are providing good support and challenge about the provision for pupils who have special educational needs and/or disabilities. Following the last inspection, improvement planning now shows how well the school is progressing with its priorities. As a result, governors can hold leaders to account for the impact of actions taken. Governors are also developing their own skills and are proactive in identifying suitable training, including, for example, understanding school performance information. However, although the governing body undertakes a systematic review of policy documents, governors do not routinely ensure that the most up-to-date versions are available on the school's website.
- The provision for children in the early years is also developing well. In particular, the links between the pre-school and Reception Year in the main school are being strengthened. This is seen, for example, in developments relating to the teaching of early reading in the pre-school. You rightly recognise, however, that there is more to do to see significant impact on children's readiness for learning as they transfer to the main school.

Next steps for the school

Leaders and those responsible for governance should:

- fully establish the recent improvements to leadership and provision for pupils who have special educational needs and/or disabilities, so they make rapid progress
- continue to develop the links between the pre-school and the Reception Year so that children are well-equipped for learning in the main school
- ensure that teaching is consistently effective in challenging pupils to reach higher standards, particularly for pupils of average ability
- ensure that leaders' checks make clear the impact of teaching on pupils' learning and in particular, review the impact of marking and feedback on learning and on teachers' workloads.

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

Yours sincerely

Lee Northern
Her Majesty's Inspector

Information about the inspection

I held discussions with you and with your leader of teaching and learning. I met with the special educational needs coordinator and with the leader of the pre-school setting. I looked at your school improvement planning and self-evaluation summary. I scrutinised safeguarding records and we discussed a wide range of matters related to safeguarding and pupils' safety and welfare, including staff recruitment and vetting procedures. Together, we visited classes throughout the school, where we also looked at examples of pupils' work. I met with two governors and scrutinised recent minutes of meetings of the full governing body. I also met with a group of staff, and with some children from Years 2, 5 and 6 to hear their views about their experiences of school. I also met informally with other pupils at different times. I considered the responses to the online questionnaire, Parent View, and spoke with a small number of parents at the start of the school day.

