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Mrs Debbie Clarke
Headteacher
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Dear Mrs Clarke

Short inspection of Buckminster Primary School

Following my visit to the school on 30 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 April 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 has been through a time of considerable change since the last inspection. You have been in post for 18 months. During this time, you have successfully led the opening of a vibrant pre-school. You have managed a number of temporary and permanent staffing changes, including supporting other leaders to develop their roles. You have been particularly successful in drawing together the whole staff team, to continue to move the school forward.

Governors are well informed. You ensure that they have an accurate understanding of the school. They check what is reported to them. They use their skills effectively to challenge and support you and other leaders who are beginning to take on further responsibility.

Leaders have had an ongoing focus to continually improve teaching since the last inspection. Good teaching has been sustained during recent staff changes. You have a deep and accurate understanding of effective teaching and learning. You use your expertise well to shape changes to approaches and school policies, with a clear focus on improving pupils' outcomes. You seek out effective training and collaborative development, and are proactive in working with local clusters and the Oadby Learning Partnership. There are examples of highly effective teaching within

the school. You and other leaders know where there is strong practice and are using this well to support the development of others.

The small numbers and different characteristics of pupils in year groups limit the reliability of comparing the school's results in national assessments with national averages. However, it is possible to say that outcomes in reading have been consistently strong across the school over time. Outcomes in mathematics have been more variable. Pupils' progress in mathematics at key stage 2 strengthened considerably in 2017, although attainment at key stage 1 was weaker. Attainment in writing has been strong over time. However, pupils' attainment and progress in writing in key stage 2 fell significantly in 2017. You are taking effective steps to improve assessment and tracking systems across the school. You are using this information well to identify and support pupils who need extra support. You are ensuring that improving consistency in how writing skills are taught across the school is a high priority in the school's improvement plan.

Pupils enjoy their learning. You are developing a curriculum which promotes aspiration and citizenship. You also ensure that appropriate opportunities to apply literacy and numeracy skills are a consistent feature. For example, Year 5 pupils were purposefully engrossed in designing games to find a fun way of communicating their research on global plastic pollution to others. Pupils also expressed their enjoyment of opportunities such as running the healthy tuck shop. Year 6 pupils described how you support them to put their ideas into action, for example, organising their own fundraising to adopt a snow leopard.

Pupils' behaviour and attitudes remain strong. Pupils are well behaved and respectful of each other and adults across all aspects of the school day. Pupils told the inspector that the '4 Rs' of respectful, responsible, reflective and resourceful are helping them to be more resilient in their learning. Pupils' enthusiasm for school is further evident in attendance continuing to be above the national average.

Parents and carers particularly value the caring and engaging Nursery and early years classes, where skilful staff ensure that children make a confident start to school.

A large majority of parents have a very high level of confidence in the school. However, a minority of parents do not feel changes or decisions have been well communicated. Evidence gathered during the inspection showed leaders had consistently drawn on a range of views and information to make well-considered decisions. Leaders are mindful that they continue to find ways to ensure that all parents feel equally well informed.

Safeguarding is effective.

You have ensured that all safeguarding arrangements are fit for purpose. Staff have a clear understanding of their responsibilities to safeguard and ensure the welfare of pupils. You have ensured appropriate training for all staff. Staff are confident to report any concerns they have about children. Records are detailed and of a high

quality. When appropriate, the school works closely and constructively with outside agencies.

You and your staff know the pupils and families well. Pupils say they feel safe and trust all adults to help them. They said the headteacher is particularly good at 'sorting things out' because if there's a problem 'we work together to solve it'.

Pupils showed good understanding of how to keep themselves safe, including in relation to e-safety and older pupils feeling confident in readiness for secondary school.

Inspection findings

- When you joined the school, you identified that assessment for tracking pupils' ongoing progress was not sufficiently coherent across the school, especially in light of changes to national assessments. You have successfully introduced a new system for tracking. You are using this effectively as a continual point of reference. Information on the tracking system is consistently accurate with evidence in books. You are assiduous in following up with teachers on agreed actions from pupils' progress meetings. As the leader for the provision for pupils who have special educational needs and/or disabilities, you are particularly vigilant in identifying and taking action where pupils are at risk of falling behind. Discussions with teachers, evidence in books and scrutiny of leaders' monitoring show the precision of teachers' planning and feedback to pupils is improving. You have a detailed understanding of what this is telling you. However, you are not using this analysis sharply enough to inform more precise actions for improvement, so all leaders and staff have the same level of understanding.
- We looked together at how effectively writing is being taught, particularly in key stage 2. Teachers use interesting texts, often linked to topics, as a stimulus to encourage pupils' purposeful writing. For example, lower key stage 2 pupils were carefully considering effective questions for character interviews in role as a 'journalist'. Pupils were excited that they were going to use their writing to produce filmed interviews. Teachers are consistently weaving in specific grammar, punctuation and spelling skills that have been taught. Training has been provided to improve teachers' questioning skills. This was evident in teachers and teaching assistants consistently using appropriate questions to check and develop pupils' understanding. Pupils could explain when and why to use grammatical devices or punctuation to good effect in their writing. The newly appointed English leader is highly skilled in guiding pupils to write effectively and is starting to support other teachers. Teachers are using improved tracking and assessment to give pupils more precise guidance on how to improve their writing, in line with school policy. However, teachers are not all equally as skilled in showing pupils how to use this feedback effectively to improve their work.
- We also looked at how well mathematics is being taught, especially in key stage 1. You have provided effective training for teachers and updated teaching materials and equipment. As a result, staff now have a good understanding of what and how you want them to teach. You have worked with the mathematics leader to establish an effective calculation policy, which is securing strong

number skills across the school. Reception children were confidently counting in twos when constructing their own Noah's Ark, whilst Year 6 pupils could fluently use their knowledge of division and equivalent fractions to aid swift calculation of percentages. The mathematics leader has received training, which she is using well to support colleagues in school. She has also provided workshops for parents to help them to support their children at home. In line with the school's policy, teachers are consistently planning sequences of learning which introduce practical models and pictorial representations to aid pupils' understanding of mathematical concepts. Teachers are developing their planning and questioning to provide more opportunities for pupils to reason, explain and prove their understanding. However, teachers are not consistently planning problems with the right level of challenge to demonstrate the skills and habits pupils need in order to deepen their understanding further.

- You took on a large proportion of leadership roles upon joining the school, due to maternity cover and staff changes. You have now ensured that wider leadership roles have been allocated and those who already have leadership responsibilities are receiving appropriate training to fulfil their roles. Other leaders value your calm and collaborative approach and told the inspector 'now we have genuine leadership roles'. They have clear commitment and appropriate skills and are starting to contribute effectively to school actions for improvement. However, they do not yet have a concise understanding of how actions impact on improving pupils' outcomes.

Next steps for the school

Leaders and those responsible for governance should ensure that:

- teachers consistently show pupils how to use feedback to improve their writing and deepen their understanding
- teachers better explain to pupils how to tackle tasks which require them to apply their knowledge and explain their thinking, in order to deepen their mathematical understanding
- information from monitoring and evaluation is used more precisely to refine actions for improvement so that all leaders continue to move the school forward.

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

Yours sincerely

Mandy Wilding
Ofsted Inspector

Information about the inspection

During the inspection, I met with you and shared my key lines of enquiry. I also met with the assistant headteacher and other teachers with leadership responsibilities. I met with the chair of the governing body and a parent governor. I also spoke to a representative of the local authority. I visited lessons in each class, at least once accompanied by you, with 11 visits in all. We examined samples of pupils' work and talked with pupils to evaluate the quality of their learning. I spoke with a group of pupils. I observed pupils' behaviour across the school day and during lessons.

In addition, I scrutinised a range of the school's documents, including those relating to pupils' progress, the school's improvement planning, its self-evaluation and documents relating to safeguarding. I spoke with 15 parents at the start of the school day and took account of the 32 responses to Parent View, Ofsted's online survey, and 29 responses to Ofsted's free-text service. I also considered the 10 responses to Ofsted's online staff survey. There were no responses from pupils to consider.