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Mrs Melanie Smallwood  
Headteacher  
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Dear Mrs Smallwood

### **Short inspection of Bishops Tawton Primary School**

Following my visit to the school on 23 January 2019, 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 2015.

#### **This school continues to be good.**

The leadership team has maintained the good quality of education in the school since the last inspection. Based on the evidence gathered during this short inspection, I am of the opinion that the school has demonstrated strong practice and marked improvement in specific areas. This may indicate that the school has improved significantly overall. Therefore, I am recommending that the school's next inspection be a section 5 inspection.

You and your leadership team, including governors, are skilled leaders and have maintained high standards. You identify the school's key strengths and areas for improvement accurately within your well-formulated self-evaluation and development plans. You are proud of the school's strong community feel. Pupils share this feeling. All staff who responded to their questionnaire expressed similar pride in being able to work at Bishops Tawton. Almost all the parents who responded to the online questionnaire would recommend the school. One parent echoed the views of the vast majority when writing, 'The school is a real community, with links to the wider community. It has set my children up perfectly for life in the wider world.'

You work with determination and passion to ensure that the school sustains several key strengths. Pupils' behaviour and attitudes to learning are exemplary and reflect

the high quality of the relationships they share with each other and with staff. Strong teaching and additional support continue in all parts of the school. From the moment children enter the school they experience a rich curriculum that engages them and motivates them to work hard. The early years provision is stimulating and adults are skilled in encouraging children to express their ideas and to use an increasingly wide vocabulary. High outcomes in Year 1 phonics screening checks and national assessments at the end of key stages 1 and 2 similarly reflect the pupils' successful progress.

With the full support of staff, governors and parents, you are unremitting in your efforts and planned actions to build on strengths. Skilled teachers and assistants plan and work closely together to help pupils gain the confidence and understanding to achieve at greater depth, academically and personally.

You and your leadership team have responded well to the areas for improvement identified by the previous inspection. You have ensured that all groups of pupils, but especially the most able, have strengthened their progress and their ability to solve problems in mathematics. This is illustrated by the well-above-average performance in national assessments of mathematics. Similarly, your success in improving the presentation of pupils' work is clearly evident in their books, especially mathematics and writing books. Your development plan rightly identifies that some pupils still need to improve their handwriting.

### **Safeguarding is effective.**

Leaders, including governors, have created a strong culture of safeguarding. They ensure that all arrangements are fit for purpose and keep pupils safe. For example, leaders and administrative staff work meticulously to sustain an accurate single central record of adults' suitability to work with pupils. All staff give high priority to pupils' safety and welfare to keep them safe at school.

All parents who responded to the online survey agreed that pupils feel safe at school. One parent encapsulated these views when writing, 'I feel safe in the knowledge that my children are well looked after and the school provides a safe environment for learning.' Older pupils act as playground friends and warmly and diligently support younger pupils at breaktimes. In response, younger pupils appreciate the help they receive and say, 'We feel safe at this school because everyone is so friendly.' The curriculum strongly supports pupils' safety. Pupils learn how to stay safe and look after themselves and each other. They take care when using computers and when playing and learning outdoors, for example during 'forest school' activities.

### **Inspection findings**

- The pupils' well-above-average performance in national assessments at the end of key stages 1 and 2 in recent years has shown year-on-year improvement. Consequently, the first line of enquiry considered how effectively leaders are sustaining pupils' strong progress through the school. In addition, I examined the

learning of pupils capable of reaching high standards for their age.

- You and your staff share an unremitting commitment to helping pupils achieve their best. This includes advancing pupils' development as learners, a focus that was apparent in all classes. Pupils across the range of ability rose enthusiastically to the challenge of explaining their ideas in response to adults' probing questioning. For example, when challenged to write a better narrative poem by thinking for themselves, pupils in Year 6 made sensible connections with previous learning.
- You extend the skills of staff through high-quality training and professional development. Staff welcome frequent opportunities to share and further deepen their expertise with colleagues in this and other local schools. As a result, staff have strengthened their subject knowledge. They are successfully promoting the progress of both middle- and high-attaining pupils. This is evident in pupils' confident use of a wider and more complex range of vocabulary when writing. It is also seen in the pupils' increasing fluency in calculating and reasoning in mathematics. For example, pupils in Years 4 and 5 showed good skills in measuring lengths and angles to create house plans.
- Your accurate assessments of pupils' progress show a rising proportion of pupils working at greater depth as they move through the school. However, the scrutiny of pupils' work in books showed that at times the good quality of handwriting and spelling seen in writing books was not continued in other subjects.
- The second line of enquiry examined how effectively leaders and teachers ensure that disadvantaged pupils achieve just as well as their peers.
- You evaluate the school's provision with care and accuracy. You use the detailed information provided to drive improvement effectively. This includes making decisive use of pupil premium funding to provide targeted and skilled teaching and additional learning support for disadvantaged pupils. Consequently, funding enables disadvantaged pupils to make the same strong progress as others in the school. Your well-considered use of additional funding also enables disadvantaged pupils to participate in all areas of the curriculum. For example, these pupils are supported in joining school trips and participating in instrumental tuition to boost their personal and wider skills.
- My final line of enquiry considered how well leaders and governors are improving pupils' attendance. The attendance of the vast majority of pupils is good. You are diligent in applying your well-formulated procedures to tackle persistent absenteeism. You and your staff work closely with parents and outside agencies to reduce absence. There has been a notable improvement in the attendance of some pupils this year as a result of actions taken and the support provided. Consequently, the rate of pupils' attendance now matches that found nationally.

### **Next steps for the school**

Leaders and those responsible for governance should:

- sustain the high expectations placed on the development of pupils' handwriting and spelling skills, particularly when writing across the range of subjects.

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

Alexander Baxter  
**Ofsted Inspector**

### **Information about the inspection**

During the inspection, I held meetings with you and other staff who have leadership responsibilities. I met with the members of the school's governing body and also held a telephone conversation with a representative of the local authority. I visited classrooms with you and we collected and scrutinised samples of pupils' work in books. I talked with individual pupils during visits to classrooms and observed them reading and checking their work. I heard selected pupils reading and talked to them about their reading at home and school. I checked a range of documents relating to safeguarding with you and your administrative staff. We also examined details of pupils' attendance, pupils' progress and the school's self-evaluation and development plan. I took account of 80 responses to the Ofsted online survey, Parent View, and 49 additional written comments from parents. I also took account of 18 responses to the staff survey.