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Mrs Vicky French  
Head of School  
Biscovey Nursery and Infant Community School  
Lamellyn Road  
Par  
Cornwall  
PL24 2DB

Dear Mrs French

### **Short inspection of Biscovey Nursery and Infant Community School**

Following my visit to the school on 1 May 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 your predecessor school was judged to be good in March 2013.

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

Pupils are well prepared for the next stage of their education by the time they leave the school at the end of Year 2. More pupils make good progress to reach the national average compared with other pupils nationally in reading, writing and mathematics. In addition, more pupils reach the standard of greater depth.

The school has experienced significant staffing problems since the school has opened. In particular, staffing in Year 1 has provided challenges for leaders. This has been a cause of contention for a number of parents. However, parents I spoke to believe that their children are now more settled and that behaviour in the school has improved. It is clear from my visit that the school is firmly back on track and providing a good quality of education.

Leaders and managers have strong commitment and good capacity to continue to improve the school. You have a clear vision for the school, which is shared by leaders at all levels. As a local authority moderator of writing, you have been able to use your expertise in the writing curriculum to ensure that pupils' standards in writing remain strong in your school. Pupils' writing in Year 2 is particularly strong. You and your team provide support for other schools across the Aspire Trust, improving standards in phonics, writing and mathematics.

You have an acute understanding of the strengths of the school and areas that require further work. You are working determinedly on the right aspects for improvement. For example, in 2018, the proportion of pupils meeting the required standard in the Year 1 phonics screening check declined to below the national average. You have reorganised the way phonics is taught across the school and

have invested wisely in training staff. This work is proving successful in raising standards.

### **Safeguarding is effective.**

There is a strong culture of safeguarding in the school. Staff talk with confidence about how they apply their training to ensure that they are doing all they can to keep pupils safe and minimise pupils' risk of harm.

Leaders responsible for safeguarding are assiduous in their record-keeping. They work closely with external agencies and follow up any concerns swiftly and with thoroughness to assure themselves that everything is being done to minimise risk. Hub councillors and trust leaders make regular and rigorous checks to ensure that the school's procedures keep children safe and are in line with current legislation.

Pupils feel safe in school and say that they know how to keep safe. Parents and carers agree. A few of the parent free-text responses reflect that parents have had concerns in the past about pupil behaviour and safety. However, you have successfully remedied this. Pupils play and learn alongside each other happily and conduct themselves well around the school.

### **Inspection findings**

- In 2018, the proportion of pupils attaining the expected standard in the Year 1 national phonics screening check dipped to below the national average. Leaders have taken successful action to refine the teaching of phonics. Highly effective leadership in this aspect of the school's work has led to the development of new teaching approaches. The teaching of phonics is also highly effective across the school. The school's approach focuses on the teaching of decoding to help pupils read accurately. Combined with this, it is to teach comprehension skills to improve their understanding of what they read, as well as their ability to write in sentences and apply phonics skills to spell accurately. Our scrutiny of work in books showed that pupils apply their knowledge of phonics well to spell accurately. As a result of this thorough approach to teaching, most of those Year 2 pupils who did not meet the expected standard in the phonics screening check last year have caught up.
- My second line of enquiry focused on the effectiveness of support for disadvantaged pupils. In 2018, only one third of the disadvantaged children in the early years reached a good level of development. In particular, few boys who were eligible for the additional pupil premium funding left the early years ready for Year 1. Your early years teachers have engaged in a national project to encourage boys to write in the early years. Teachers have enhanced the learning environments indoors and out to promote and improve boys' writing. Boys in the early years are now eager to write and make good progress.
- Leaders' actions to improve disadvantaged pupils' attainment and progress in key stage 1 have also been successful. The proportion of disadvantaged pupils who reached the expected standard by the end of Year 2 is similar to the national average. Your team have deepened the analysis they undertake of disadvantaged pupils' learning. This has helped to identify the support these pupils need so that

more reach 'a greater depth', particularly in mathematics. A scrutiny of pupils' work reflected that there is no difference between the attainment and progress of disadvantaged pupils and other pupils in the school.

- A scrutiny of books of disadvantaged pupils and others highlighted that weaknesses in pupils' ability to solve problems and reason reach beyond disadvantaged pupils. The leader of mathematics has correctly identified weaknesses in the school's curriculum in its support of pupils' reasoning and solving of problems in mathematics. In particular, work in books shows that pupils in Year 1 get off to a slow start, often repeating skills already well established in the early years. However, teaching in Year 2 supports pupils in catching up. Plans are in place to remedy this weakness and there are already positive signs of improvement. Leaders identified the development of phonics as a more urgent priority for the school, so improvements in mathematics are less established across the school.
- I also focused on the provision for pupils with special educational needs and/or disabilities (SEND). In the past, too few pupils have overcome barriers to be well prepared for the next stage in their education. Trust leaders have provided effective support. The leader of SEND provides effective support and guidance to teachers so that they support children well. Where pupils have complex needs, leaders liaise with external agencies effectively to gain the guidance they need. Children with SEND make good progress against their targets. Typically, parent comments reflect the high esteem they hold for teaching assistants and teachers.
- My fourth key line focused on safeguarding and pupils' attendance. Pupil absence rates have been slightly higher than the national averages for the last three years. However, significant work has been done to improve attendance over the last academic year. You work effectively with others, including the education welfare officer, to monitor pupils' attendance. You identify pupils who are at risk of low attendance and work with parents and families to tackle this. As a result, attendance is improving strongly to be at least in line with the national average at this time. The attendance of vulnerable pupils is also improving, including those with SEND and disadvantaged pupils. Furthermore, you have been successful in reducing the number of pupils whose attendance is persistently low.

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

Leaders and those responsible for governance should ensure that the good work in developing mathematics is further embedded to enable a greater proportion of pupils, including the disadvantaged pupils, to reach the higher standard.

I am copying this letter to the chair of the board of trustees and the chief executive officer of the multi-academy trust, the regional schools commissioner and the director of children's services for Cornwall. This letter will be published on the Ofsted website.

Yours sincerely

Tracy Hannon  
**Her Majesty's Inspector**

### **Information about the inspection**

We agreed the timetable and activities for the inspection. I worked extensively with you, including sampling pupils' books and progress together. I spoke with your designated safeguarding leader, scrutinised safeguarding records and discussed a wide range of matters related to safeguarding, including staff recruitment, training and vetting arrangements. I evaluated evidence to show how you work with other agencies to keep children safe. Together, we visited classes across the school. I also met with governance representatives from the trust and with hub councillors. I reviewed school documents, including the school's self-evaluation summary and samples of governors' visits. I took full account of the 34 responses on Parent View, Ofsted's online survey, as well as other surveys, including free-texts received for the inspection, and spoke separately with parents. I also took account of the staff survey responses to evaluate aspects of the school's effectiveness further.