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Kerry Tonkin
Headteacher
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Dear Ms Tonkin

Short inspection of Bishop Fox's School

Following my visit to the school on 22 February 2017 with Kathy Maddocks HMI, 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 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 moved from deputy headteacher into your new role as headteacher in January 2017. You have provided a sense of continuity and cohesion for staff and pupils while simultaneously preparing to move the school on to the next stage of its development. You are building on the work of your predecessor by further developing a culture of high expectations of staff and pupils. You are well supported by the governing body. They are knowledgeable about the school's strengths and weaknesses and hold the senior leaders to account appropriately.

You continue to develop an environment in which pupils enjoy coming to school. Their successes are celebrated, they enjoy their lessons and they make good progress. You have a clear focus on supporting pupils who are vulnerable or anxious, thus allowing them to play a full part in the richness of life at school. The previous inspection recommended you improve the information teachers have about pupils who have special educational needs and/or disabilities. You responded very promptly and teachers now receive the necessary information to help them make suitable provision for these pupils. As a result of this supportive culture, pupils' attendance rates are above the national average. Disadvantaged pupils' attendance has improved and is now broadly in line with the national average.

Governors, senior leaders and staff have responded very positively to the previous inspection and have effectively tackled the areas for improvement the report highlighted. Most pupils are working and achieving well and are on course to meet the appropriately demanding targets the school has set. The most able pupils are now challenged appropriately and make the progress they should. This group, including the most able disadvantaged pupils, do particularly well in English. You have developed a feedback policy so that pupils know how to improve their work. While this is working well in a number of subjects, not all staff or pupils are using it as well as they could do to secure the higher standards.

Securing and maintaining the quality of teaching at a consistently high level across the curriculum is a key challenge for you as you move forward in your headship. For example, teachers' expectations are sometimes not sufficiently high and pupils make slower progress over time. You have identified this as a priority for the school and are working with your middle leaders to ensure pupils' work is of a consistently high standard. Equally, you expressed your disappointment to me, when we visited some classrooms, in the standard of presentation of some pupils' work. We agreed that this can prevent some pupils from reaching their potential.

You have also targeted key areas and used external support to develop plans and work with department teams. However, you have yet to rigorously evaluate the impact of this external support. When you do, you will be better placed to build on the lessons learned.

Safeguarding is effective.

Safeguarding arrangements are secure and form a strong part of the school's culture. Governors and the leadership team have ensured that safeguarding arrangements are fit for purpose and that records are of a high quality and detailed. Staff are trained well on how to keep pupils safe from abuse, sexual exploitation, radicalisation and extremism. Pupils understand how to keep themselves safe online and who to go to should they feel threatened.

You have created a welfare team that meets fortnightly to make sure that the more vulnerable pupils with complex needs are safe and secure in school and ready to learn. The team works determinedly, yet sensitively, with pupils, parents and external agencies to monitor and support pupils.

Inspection findings

- The school's work to improve the quality of teaching, learning and assessment is having a positive impact. The headteacher knows her staff well and works with her senior colleagues to hold middle leaders to account for the progress pupils make. Consequently middle leaders, particularly in English, mathematics and science, are driving improvements in the quality of teaching, learning and assessment.
- The school has focused clearly on areas of poorer performance. It has undertaken a number of departmental reviews working with external consultants

to act as a catalyst for improvement. They have provided a sound basis for the school to improve its performance in these areas. In design and technology and history, for example, there is good evidence that the recommendations of the review have been embraced and teachers' practice is improving as a result.

- The school has developed its own 'teaching and learning framework' to support teachers to explore and develop approaches that work best for them in the classroom. This is supplemented by the effective deployment of teaching coaches who work alongside colleagues to encourage them to reflect on and improve their teaching. Together, these approaches are leading to further improvements in the quality of teaching.
- Pupils behave well around the school and in lessons. The previously high rates of exclusion have dropped as a result of the support you have put in place for pupils who display challenging behaviour.
- The quality of work and performance of boys is improving, although it is still weaker than that of girls. School leaders are aware of this and are taking steps to address it. For example, a project to inspire boys to improve their literacy skills is just beginning. This, however, is a long-term project across all year groups and it is too soon to judge its impact at this stage.
- The school is working hard to ensure that disadvantaged pupils maximise their potential. Historically, the attendance of disadvantaged pupils has been weak and their rate of exclusion too high. School leaders have reacted appropriately and their actions are enabling disadvantaged pupils to overcome their barriers to success. As a result, achievement for this group is rising, attendance is now in line with the national average and exclusions have dropped markedly. The school also reports an increase in parental engagement at, for example, parents' evenings.
- Disadvantaged pupils are currently making good progress across the school. However, the school's plans for spending the pupil premium funding lack precision and leaders are unable to say which of the strategies they employed had the greatest impact. This is preventing them from using the additional funding as effectively as they might.

Next steps for the school

Leaders and those responsible for governance should ensure that high expectations and resulting academic standards are maintained and improved by:

- ensuring that actions, including the use of pupil premium funding, are rigorously analysed and evaluated so that pupil achievement is maximised
- improve further the quality of teaching, learning and assessment so that all pupils benefit from high-quality teaching across the whole school.

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

Yours sincerely

Andrew Lovett
Her Majesty's Inspector

Information about the inspection

During the inspection, Kathy Maddocks HMI and I met with you, senior leaders, governors, staff and pupils. We visited lessons to observe learning and looked at the quality of work in pupils' books. We considered documentary evidence related to the impact of the schools' work, including safeguarding, attendance, and the use of the pupil premium grant. We took into account the 173 responses to the Ofsted online survey, Parent View, 169 comments written by parents and responses to questionnaires completed by 152 pupils and 87 staff.