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Mrs Gina Finch
Executive Headteacher
Buckland Brewer Primary School
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Dear Mrs Finch

Short inspection of Buckland Brewer Primary School

Following my visit to the school on 9 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 February 2012.

This school continues to be good.

The leadership team has maintained the good quality of education in the school since the last inspection. The strong leadership provided by you and your governors ensures that challenges faced by the school are tackled with resilience and resolve. Any areas that require improvement are efficiently rectified through rigorous performance management and the provision of high-quality opportunities for professional development. Changes in staff and your recent partnership with a local cooperative school trust have brought a freshness of approach to the school.

At the time of the previous inspection, the school was asked to ensure that your very small cohort of Reception children were given more opportunities to extend their social skills with others of a similar age. Over the past few years there has been a dramatic rise in the number of early years children attending the school. Currently, the 11 children in Reception develop their social skills well with each other. They also frequently work alongside Reception children from Parkham School with which your school is federated. In addition to this, weekly sessions with the village pre-school also enhance their social experiences. Consequently, by the time they are ready to start Year 1, they have all met or exceeded the standard expected for their personal, social and emotional skills. Working closely with the early years leader from Parkham, you are gradually improving the outdoor learning opportunities for your Reception children. Nevertheless, you know that further developments are needed to enable the outdoor area to be used effectively to reinforce the children's reading and communication skills.

Since the previous inspection, the school has invested in a range of resources to help accelerate the progress of pupils who find reading a challenge. Books that help pupils to use their knowledge of different sounds are successfully supporting them to gain confidence in their reading skills. The library has been revamped to make it more appealing to both boys and girls. Effective use is made of the local authority library service to enhance the range of books available for pupils to develop their reading skills.

Safeguarding is effective.

The leadership team has ensured that all safeguarding arrangements are fit for purpose and records are detailed and of high quality. The rigorous recruiting, vetting and training processes ensure that all adults who come into contact with pupils are trustworthy and keep them safe. Regular safeguarding meetings between the headteacher and the lead safeguarding governor enable members of the governing body to keep a close eye on any patterns or trends in pupil attendance and any incidents of inappropriate behaviour. You have strong links with specialist agencies who support those pupils and their families who need extra help and guidance. There is an impressive focus on keeping pupils safe from the misuse of new technologies. For example, pupils demonstrate a very strong understanding of how to keep safe when using the internet. They know that 'it is a great place to visit but also dangerous' if care is not taken when using different sites.

The majority of parents who responded online to Parent View and those spoken to during the inspection reported that their children felt safe in school. This was confirmed in discussion with pupils. Most parents also considered that their children were well looked after and pupils firmly agreed. They explained that there was always an adult they could turn to. A number of parents raised concerns via Parent View about the behaviour of pupils in school. Some were also unhappy with the way that bullying incidents were dealt with. However, the parents and pupils I spoke to felt that the occasional incidents of anti-social behaviour were dealt with appropriately. They recognised that incidents were mainly linked with pupils who found difficulty managing their emotions. One parent expressed the views of many by explaining that 'the fact that I have heard very little and seen none speaks volumes about how the school manages' any anti-social behaviour, including bullying.

Inspection findings

- Not all of the eight Year 6 pupils who took the 2016 national tests for mathematics made the progress that was expected of them. This was particularly so for the middle-attaining pupils and boys. I took this area as a line of enquiry to explore and check that all current groups of pupils were making better progress. The new mathematics subject leader, who joined the school at the start of this academic year, is also the teacher for Years 3 to 6. The energy and enthusiasm she has brought with her have been put to very effective use to accelerate pupils' progress in mathematics. By making full use of the professional training opportunities on offer to her, working in partnership with other schools

and liaising closely with the lead governor for mathematics, she has already had a positive impact on pupils' progress. The change in the way that mathematics is taught is enabling pupils, including those who are disadvantaged, to apply their knowledge and skills to a range of mathematical activities. This is because teaching staff are successfully securing pupils' mathematical skills. They achieve this by making sure that pupils know the reasoning behind the concepts that they are learning and by extending pupils' knowledge. Using games to support the pupils' fluency in recognising and remembering concepts such as calculation, number patterns and working in numbers over 100 has had an impressive impact on engaging boys and those who find mathematics a challenge. You and your staff are fully aware that work still needs to be done to improve pupils' courage and confidence when tackling complex mathematical problems.

- Published information in 2016 indicated that persistent absence was an issue for the school. I explored the reasons why this information suggested that pupils who were disadvantaged and those who had special educational needs did not attend regularly. You were very clear about who these pupils were and were able to confirm that their absences were unavoidable because of serious medical issues. You and your administrative staff demonstrate a vigilant approach to attendance. If any child does not turn up for morning registration, and no explanation has been given, a call home is made within 15 minutes. You and your governors have a clear policy that holidays during term time are unacceptable because too much valuable learning time is lost.
- A small but significant proportion of parents who responded to Parent View indicated that they were unhappy with the way that the school was led and managed. Discussions with all members of staff, meetings with a group of parents and other correspondence I received could not justify the negative responses submitted. The parents I spoke to all agreed that you are 'a fantastic headteacher who is realistic and addresses everything'. They also explained that you do 'over and above what is expected'. Nevertheless, you and your governors recognise that you need to work with parents who find it difficult to engage in a positive partnership with the school.

Next steps for the school

Leaders and those responsible for governance should ensure that:

- the outdoor area provides opportunities for Reception children to apply their reading and writing skills in a range of different contexts
- they support those parents whose engagement with the school has not been positive and work in partnership with them for the benefit of their children's learning
- pupils are given further opportunities to develop confidence and courage when working on complex mathematical problems.

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

Lorna Brackstone
Her Majesty's Inspector

Information about the inspection

I met with you and the subject leaders for English and mathematics to discuss the improvements which had been made since the previous inspection. I considered the school's self-evaluation of its effectiveness and the development plan. I looked at all safeguarding records and explored your recruitment and vetting procedures. I also held discussions with three governors, including the chair of governors and all members of staff who currently work in school. Together we visited lessons in the both the Reception/Key Stage 1 class and the Key Stage 2 class to see how the current pupils were progressing. We also looked at the work they had completed since the start of this academic year and talked to them about the progress they had made. I had a discussion with six Year 6 pupils. I looked at the 27 survey results from Parent View and considered the comments that had been submitted.