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Mrs Rebecca Smith
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Dear Mrs Smith

Short inspection of Barnabas Oley CofE Primary School

Following my visit to the school on 20 March 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 November 2013.

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 certain areas. This may indicate that the school is improving towards being outstanding. Therefore, I am recommending that the school's next inspection be a section 5 inspection.

Leaders are fulfilling the school's aims of striving to 'be the best school that it can be'. Since the previous inspection you have strengthened leadership by ensuring that leaders are well trained and are sharing the same high aspirations as you in developing a strong culture for teaching, learning and good behaviour in the school. Leaders at all levels are rigorous in their monitoring of teaching and learning in order to set challenging targets for improvement to drive standards up and move the school towards outstanding. Therefore, team work is strong, and staff share the same vision in wanting the best for all pupils.

You enjoy the confidence of parents, staff and pupils in ensuring that standards across the school have continued to rise since the previous inspection. Typical of other parents' comments, one wrote, 'Barnabas Oley is a brilliant school; my child is making excellent progress, teachers are very good, and the school always keeps me well informed about how well my child is doing.'

In the early years, the proportion of children achieving a good level of development was above the national average in 2017 and showed an increase on the previous year's outcome. Children currently in the early years are making good progress from starting points that were broadly typical for their age. Attainment continues to be above average in reading, writing and mathematics at key stages 1 and 2. An increased proportion of pupils are currently working at greater depth across the school in all subjects. There has been a three-year increase in the proportion of pupils reaching the expected standard in the phonics screening check, which was high in 2017. Your accurate information about the progress that current pupils are making shows that nearly all pupils in Year 1 are currently on course to reach the expected standard in phonics.

Inspection findings show how you have successfully addressed the area for improvement from the previous inspection in relation to writing. Your governors have rigorously monitored the impact of the work of leaders in addressing this area of improvement. Through regular focused visits and their scrutiny of the reports from school leaders, they are providing strong challenge to the work of the school to make sure that it grows from strength to strength.

You have strengthened the curriculum so that it is more stimulating to pupils by establishing strong links with local secondary schools and with the community. Secondary school leaders of modern foreign languages regularly deliver lessons to pupils across the school. Throughout their time at Barnabas Oley, pupils learn Spanish but also have the opportunity to learn other languages, including French, Italian and German, during Golden Time workshops. Secondary schools with whom you have formed links also provide extension activities in mathematics, English and history for the most able pupils in Years 5 and 6. Music and performing arts are additional strengths of the school. Pupils have performed in many plays for the local community, and participated with other schools in singing at national performances held at the O2 Arena, Wembley Stadium and the Royal Albert Hall. Through these activities, you are ensuring that pupils develop a love of and a thirst for learning, and this was seen during our visits to lessons.

Pupils' behaviour, their attitudes to learning and their spiritual, moral, social and cultural development are also clear strengths of the school. Pupils are confident and enthusiastic learners. This is reflected in their above-average attendance over the last three years. They are very considerate of and respectful to others. Through strong links with other schools, pupils have developed an appreciation and respect for those from different cultural and religious backgrounds. The school strongly promotes British values, especially through the curriculum and the warm and caring family ethos. The school enables pupils to make informed choices about their future lives. Pupils in Year 5 attend a careers convention, and during the summer term you work with them to plan specific leadership responsibilities that they will assume when they transfer to Year 6. Older pupils take on responsibilities as house captains, librarians, playleaders, junior travel ambassadors, sports ambassadors, lunchtime assistants and Reception buddies.

Safeguarding is effective.

You are working effectively with parents and other agencies to promote a strong culture of safeguarding in the school. All safeguarding training is up to date and your single central record shows that you meet legal requirements by rigorously checking the suitability of staff and visitors to work with pupils. You, your governors and the staff are successfully implementing the school's policies and procedures to safeguard all pupils, including children in the early years. All staff actively engage in children's learning and continually ensure their safety so that the welfare requirements for the early years are met.

Parents, pupils and staff agree that pupils feel safe. Bullying is rare and it is dealt with effectively. Pupils know how to stay safe. They learn about using the internet safely and how to avoid the potential dangers of social media sites. They were seen handling computers and other equipment safely in lessons. Pupils move safely from one area of the school to another. Staff maintain high levels of supervision to protect pupils' safety and well-being.

Inspection findings

- In order to determine that the school remained good and is improving, I wanted to find out how well pupils across the school are achieving in writing. This was because in 2017 pupils' attainment and progress in writing was not as strong as it was in reading, and writing was identified as an area for improvement at the previous inspection. The school's data shows that there has been sustained improvement in the progress that current pupils are making in writing across the school. The proportions of pupils working at greater depth in writing have increased significantly. This is because leaders have checked that teachers' assessments are accurate and have put in place successful strategies to improve writing.
- Teachers are consistently incorporating the development of spelling within the teaching of writing, which has resulted in more pupils working at higher standards in writing this year. Pupils' written work shows they have increased opportunities to write at depth within a range of topics and subjects. Their work is presented neatly, there are no gaps in their learning and they are rapidly building on their prior learning over time. However, the school rightly recognises the need to increase further the proportion of pupils reaching the expected standard in writing so that it is in line with that for reading.
- I also wanted to establish how well adults were supporting pupils who have special educational needs (SEN) and/or disabilities in lessons. This was because there has been a steady increase in the proportion of pupils who have SEN and/or disabilities since the last inspection and this leads to annual fluctuations in the school's performance where cohort sizes are relatively small. The leader for SEN has developed strong classroom support to enable these pupils to make good progress over time. During our visits to lessons, we saw teaching assistants use a variety of well-chosen strategies and resources to enable pupils who have

SEN and/or disabilities to access their learning fully. In discussion, these pupils said that their work was pitched at the right level and challenged them.

- Work in pupils' books shows that those who have SEN and/or disabilities are making good progress over time, which was also confirmed in the school's information about their progress. The recent local authority review of the school's SEN provision found that these pupils were making good progress because of strong leadership and provision and identified no significant areas for development.
- Finally, I wanted to consider the impact that subject leaders are making on improving pupils' progress, because the school's self-evaluation identified the need to strengthen this aspect of leadership. I found that since the last inspection, subject leadership has greatly improved. Subject leaders have carried out detailed audits of their subjects and conducted joint reviews with governors. They have looked closely at the impact of teaching on pupils' learning to improve these aspects further and are checking that teachers' assessments are accurate. They continue to scrutinise pupils' work, review the school's progress data and check teachers' planning.
- The English leader has provided more opportunities for pupils to write extensively across a range of subjects and topics and has focused on the development of spelling and grammar to improve writing. The mathematics leader has increased the range and quality of practical resources and ensured that teachers are providing pupils with more opportunities for problem-solving and deepening their reasoning skills to develop mastery in learning. Pupils' achievements in English and mathematics continue to improve as a result of strong subject leadership.

Next steps for the school

Leaders and those responsible for governance should ensure that:

- the proportion of pupils reaching the standards expected for their ages in writing across all year groups is increased in line with that for reading.

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

Yours sincerely

Declan McCarthy
Ofsted Inspector

Information about the inspection

During this inspection, I carried out joint visits to all classes with the headteacher to look at the impact of teaching on pupils' learning over time. We looked at samples of pupils' work and talked to them about their learning. I heard different pupils in Years 1 and 2 read and looked at their reading records. I examined a range of documentation, including minutes of governing body meetings and records of their visits, the school's self-evaluation documents and the school development plan. I looked at attendance figures, risk assessments and records of behaviour, safeguarding policies and procedures, records of training and the single central record of checks made on the suitability of staff to work with pupils. I also looked at the school's website.

I considered parents' views by checking the 56 responses to Ofsted's online questionnaire, Parent View, parents' free-text responses and I met with a few parents who were collecting their children from school. I also took into account the 56 questionnaire responses from pupils and the 25 staff responses.