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Mrs Gill Davies
Headteacher
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Dear Mrs Davies

Short inspection of Barrington Church of England VC Primary School

Following my visit to the school on 17 January 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 September 2012.

This school continues to be good.

The leadership team has maintained the good quality of education in the school since the last inspection.

In the short time since you were appointed as the substantive headteacher in September 2016, you have maintained a strong focus on ensuring that pupils fulfil their potential. You have high aspirations for the school, and these have been shared with staff and the governing body and are well understood. Staffing changes have been managed well so that they have not negatively affected pupils' learning.

You lead the school in a calm and purposeful manner. You have strong relationships with staff, pupils and parents and are committed to ensuring that the school's motto, 'Belonging, Believing; Together Succeeding', is reflected in all aspects of its work.

You have effectively identified the strengths and weaknesses of the school. You know that to continue to improve you need to ensure that pupils always do as well in writing as they do in reading and mathematics. You agree that by sharing more widely the responsibility for checking the provision, development planning can be better focused on the main priorities. This will help staff and governors take a fuller part in securing improvement.

There is a delightful atmosphere in school. You and your staff go the extra mile to make sure that school is not only about learning in lessons. You provide a wide

range of clubs which make school exciting and fun. Older pupils said they greatly enjoyed a recent residential visit where they learned new skills such as orienteering.

You ensure that pupils understand the importance of good behaviour and this is reflected in their conduct throughout the school day. Pupils give each other good support when working. At playtimes, older pupils take great care when playing to ensure that the youngest are kept safe and happy.

Pupils are proud of their school. They happily celebrate each other's successes. They reflect thoughtfully in assemblies about how they can help others. Class ambassadors take their responsibilities very seriously. They took great care, when talking to me, to explain what their class was learning and what their role involved. This is a good example of how you enable pupils to become confident and self-assured individuals.

With good support from the governing body, you and your predecessors have successfully tackled weaknesses from the previous inspection. You have given parents more information so that they are able to do more to support their children with learning at home. Parents are very positive about the school's work. They typically make comments such as, 'every day is simply a pleasure for my child' and 'the school is very well run, it is friendly and supportive of both children and their parents.'

You have improved the mathematics curriculum since the previous inspection. Pupils are especially positive about the teaching of mental mathematics. They say that recent changes are helping them 'to think more quickly when working out a calculation'.

Safeguarding is effective.

The governing body and other leaders have ensured that safeguarding arrangements are fit for purpose and that appropriate and detailed records are kept. You have established a culture where pupils' safety is given the highest priority. Pupils are very clear that they are kept safe. They have a good awareness of the dangers they may face in later life. They talk confidently about how to use the internet safely. For example, they know what to do if they receive a message on social media from someone they do not know.

Leaders make sure that training for staff takes place regularly and that they receive updates routinely. Staff have a good awareness of how to respond to concerns if they have any. Their responsibilities in this area are well understood. Records show that any concerns are dealt with quickly.

Inspection findings

- At the start of the inspection, we agreed to focus on some key lines of enquiry. The first of these was pupils' progress in English, especially of boys. We chose this focus because attainment in reading and writing, especially in key stage 1,

was lower than in mathematics, with boys attaining less well than girls. You have already identified writing as your key area for improvement and I agree that further work is needed in this area. School data shows that, while progress for both boys and girls in writing is good most of the time, it is more uneven than in reading or mathematics. This is because teachers do not always expect enough of pupils, sometimes accepting work that is not their best. We agreed that pupils, especially boys, could take more care with their writing so that it is neat and tidy and check completed work to avoid making careless mistakes in spelling and punctuation.

- As part of this key line of enquiry, I heard some pupils reading. Pupils make good progress in reading. They read frequently for a wide range of purposes. The most able express preferences for authors or genres and read with good expression. Less-able pupils confidently use their knowledge of phonics to read unknown words.
- We also looked at provision in the early years because the proportion of children reaching the expected level of development at the end of the Reception Year fell in 2016. You and the early years staff were able to explain the reasons for this. It is clear that, while outcomes were lower than usual, this was due to lower starting points rather than weaknesses in provision. I saw that children are happy and settled in the Reception class and learn well most of the time. However, as elsewhere in the school, progress is not always good enough in writing. Teachers give children too few opportunities to practise and reinforce writing skills.
- The third key line of enquiry focused on provision for pupils who have special educational needs and/or disabilities and for the disadvantaged. We agreed to look at this because few of these pupils reached the expected level for their age by the end of Year 2 or Year 6. I found that provision for these pupils is effective. School assessment information, as well as work in pupils' books, shows that they make good progress from often lower starting points. You work well with parents, pupils and teachers to ensure that pupils' work and the support they are given are well matched to their needs.
- Together we examined, as a key line of enquiry, the rigour of school self-evaluation and how well it feeds into development planning. I was concerned that your development plan was unclear about the main targets for improvement. I found that you know the school well. However, staff and governors are not sufficiently involved in evaluating the school's work so that they can help you to identify the most important priorities from year to year and ensure that they are reflected in development planning.
- As part of the inspection focus on safeguarding, we checked the attendance of disadvantaged pupils and those who have special educational needs and/or disabilities. Historically, these pupils have attended school less frequently than others. I am reassured that you are dealing with this effectively. Current attendance information shows that your work with outside agencies is having a good effect. This has already resulted in improved attendance in the current year.

Next steps for the school

Leaders and those responsible for governance should ensure that:

- teachers always expect enough of the pupils when they are writing and, in the early years, there are more opportunities for children to practise and reinforce their writing skills
- pupils take care to present their written work neatly and check it for errors carefully
- staff and governors are more involved in self-evaluation so that development planning can be focused on the most important priorities.

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

Mike Capper
Ofsted Inspector

Information about the inspection

Evidence collected during the inspection included:

- observations of teaching and learning across the school during learning walks with the headteacher
- meetings with leaders, members of the governing body and a representative from the local authority
- informal discussions with parents and the scrutiny of 41 responses to the Ofsted 'Parent View' questionnaire
- consideration of a range of information supplied by the school, including checks on the quality of teaching, the school development plan and records relating to attendance and safeguarding procedures
- listening to pupils read
- scrutiny of school assessment information and pupils' books.