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Mrs Claire Pocock
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Dear Mrs Pocock

Short inspection of Banwell Primary School

Following my visit to the school on 5 December 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 March 2014.

This school continues to be good.

The leadership team has maintained the good quality of education in the school since the last inspection. You have a clear vision for Banwell Primary, shared by your staff and governors, that all pupils receive the best possible education. Together with strong support from your deputy, you have taken the urgent actions needed to ensure that pupils make faster progress, particularly in key stage 1. You have faced challenges, particularly in relation to staffing. However, you have secured high-quality teaching across the school through effective recruitment and by deploying staff purposefully. As a consequence, pupils achieve well across subjects as they move through the school.

As recommended in the previous inspection, you have enabled staff to share best practice. You have provided a range of training and professional development to strengthen teaching. You have introduced a new approach to improve mathematics teaching. This is providing greater challenge, especially for the most able pupils across the school. Consequently, a greater number are on track to achieve beyond the expected standards this year. Nevertheless, you recognise that there is still more to do in this respect to ensure that pupils' mathematical thinking is stretched to the full.

At the time of the previous inspection low attendance limited the progress of some pupils. Most pupils now attend well and are seldom late for school. The school works closely with other professionals, such as the education welfare officer, to help families and promote regular attendance. You have taken firm steps to reduce any

unnecessary absence over the past year. Current attendance shows improvement and is above the national figure.

Following the disappointing results in writing in key stage 1 in 2017, you have taken effective steps to improve standards. You have introduced a range of high-quality texts that are inspiring pupils to write. Improvements to the way phonic sessions are taught are improving standards in reading and pupils' knowledge of spelling patterns. However, on occasions, pupils do not apply their phonics knowledge to their writing and the quality of their work is let down by spelling errors.

A key strength of the school is pupils' enthusiasm for their learning. You and your staff have a deep understanding of pupils' capabilities. You use this knowledge well to create a varied and engaging curriculum that inspires them to work hard and develop a love of learning. Pupils state that teachers are 'amazing' at helping them to understand new ideas and concepts.

Safeguarding is effective.

You and your governors place a high priority on keeping pupils safe. You have created a vigilant culture within the school, making sure that arrangements are fit for purpose. You check that policy guidelines are followed and reviewed each year to improve their effectiveness. Procedures for recruiting staff follow the statutory guidance stringently. The governor responsible for safeguarding frequently verifies that the school's single central record is maintained accurately. Staff and governors are appropriately trained in identifying possible signs of risk and harm, including how to keep pupils safe from extremism and radicalisation. Staff are clear about how to report any concerns about pupils. All risks are thoroughly assessed by leaders and updated regularly, for example with regard to fire safety and educational visits.

You know the families of children who attend Banwell Primary well. Staff keep a close eye on their welfare, especially those whose circumstances make them vulnerable. They work closely with other agencies to ensure that pupils receive the support and care they need. Records are detailed and of good quality. Parents recognise the lengths to which staff go to provide a welcoming and inclusive school where every child is valued. Pupils confirm they feel secure in school because staff are very supportive, saying that there is 'someone you can talk to if you're worried'.

Inspection findings

- During the inspection, I met with you to discuss the school's progress since the previous inspection. We agreed the following lines of enquiry: how well the most able pupils are challenged in mathematics, how successful leaders have been in improving pupils' achievement in writing and phonics in key stage 1, and how well the school keeps pupils safe.
- You identified that while the most able pupils reach the expected standards for their age in mathematics, few exceed them. Leaders have wasted no time in implementing a teaching approach to improve levels of challenge for pupils.

Teachers plan effectively to develop pupils' fluency in calculation skills and mathematical understanding. This is having a positive impact on their mastery of number and place value. Increasingly, teachers make sure that pupils are required to reason and think more deeply. For example, the most able Year 6 pupils showed an in-depth knowledge of fractions which they used competently to explain how to solve problems. The work in pupils' books confirms that the most able are on track to achieve high standards. However, leaders recognise that the new approach is not yet fully embedded to further develop pupils' reasoning skills and mastery of mathematical concepts.

- In 2017, too few pupils reached the expected standard and beyond in writing in key stage 1. To address this, you have invested in staff training and moderation with other colleagues to improve the quality of pupils' writing. Higher-quality texts provide pupils with more adventurous vocabulary to use in their work. Together, we looked at a wide range of pupils' books and agreed that since the start of the year, standards are rising quickly and more pupils are producing imaginative writing of increasing complexity, with the correct use of grammar. Pupils write in an engaging and lively way with a more accomplished handwriting style. They write coherently with a greater sense of purpose due to the more effective teaching of grammar and punctuation. They draw on their reading to use interesting word choices, for instance to create characters in stories. However, sometimes mistakes in spelling hamper their progress towards achieving the highest possible standards.
- You have ensured that phonics is taught well. The teaching of letters and their sounds is organised well to ensure that pupils develop effective reading skills. In key stage 1, more pupils than previously are on track to meet the expected standard in the Year 1 phonics screening check. Better knowledge of phonics is ensuring that pupils read fluently and with greater understanding.

Next steps for the school

Leaders and those responsible for governance should ensure that:

- teachers further develop pupils' mathematical reasoning skills further to enable them to solve more complex problems, resulting in more pupils in key stages 1 and 2 reaching the higher standards in mathematics
- pupils' writing in key stage 1 continues to improve, particularly in their spelling.

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

Yours sincerely

Sandra Woodman
Ofsted Inspector

Information about the inspection

During the inspection, I met with you and discussed the school's self-evaluation, information about pupils' progress and improvements since the previous inspection. Together, we observed learning in classrooms and looked at a range of pupils' work in books. I listened to several pupils reading from key stage 1 and key stage 2. I met with pupils to talk about their experience of school life. I held meetings with middle leaders and with three governors. In addition, I spoke with an external advisor who supports the school. I looked at a range of written evidence, including documents relating to safeguarding and attendance information. I took account of the written comments of 79 parents who completed Ofsted's online questionnaire, Parent View, their written comments and the views of parents who spoke to me before the start of the school day. I also took account of the views of 23 members of staff and the 51 pupils who returned the online questionnaires.