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25 June 2018

Mrs Jeanette Marshall
Headteacher
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Dear Mrs Marshall

Short inspection of Butlers Court School

Following my visit to the school on 12 June 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 October 2013.

This school continues to be good.

The leadership team has maintained a good quality of education in the school since the last inspection. Your inspirational leadership has led to high standards and strong pastoral care for pupils. Butlers Court is an exciting place to learn. Leaders have ensured that there is high-quality teaching throughout the school. You know your school and community well and strive for the provision to be outstanding. You are clear about what needs to improve to make it so, because you have a very deep understanding of the school's many strengths and the areas for development. Staff feel valued and are very proud to work at Butlers Court. Governors are passionate about the school and ambitious for every pupil. They have embraced training opportunities and provide the right balance of support and challenge for senior leaders. The vast majority of parents and carers are highly complimentary about the school. One parent, representing the views of many, commented: 'A very happy and aspirational environment, which my children love. I cannot praise this school enough.'

Pupils love coming to Butlers Court. They appreciate the many things the school has to offer, including educational visits, exciting art projects, the orchestra and the wide range of after-school clubs, such as golf and football. Pupils said that their teachers make 'lessons as fun as possible'. Pupils are polite, well mannered and keen to discuss their learning. They understand that working hard helps them to succeed.

The previous inspection highlighted several strengths, including strong progress, high attainment and good behaviour. Leaders have maintained these as strengths of

the school. In Year 6 and Year 2, in 2017, the proportions of pupils who attained the expected and the higher standards in reading, writing and mathematics were above those seen nationally. Attainment is similarly high at the end of early years. At the time of the last inspection, leaders were asked to ensure that pupils were challenged in lessons. During my visits to lessons and looking at learning in pupils' books, there is clear evidence that pupils are being stretched appropriately across all subjects.

Your current self-evaluation is accurate. Leaders recognise that the progress of disadvantaged pupils is variable. Leaders have also identified that there is still work to be done to ensure that pupils who started key stage 2 with attainment that was below age-related expectations make rapid progress to catch up. We also agreed that assessment in foundation subjects needs to be improved so that pupils' starting points are more sharply identified and built on. This should now be made a key priority for leaders.

Safeguarding is effective.

School leaders and governors have ensured that all safeguarding arrangements are fit for purpose. Detailed, high-quality records show that you work closely with external agencies when needed. Recruitment and background checks to ensure the suitability of staff and volunteers are fully in place. Safeguarding training is regular and, as a result, all adults in the school understand their responsibilities for keeping pupils safe. Staff have created a very nurturing environment.

Pupils said that they feel safe in school and know who to talk to if they have any worries. The pupils who I spoke to said that they are not aware of any bullying in the school, but if there is, 'teachers would step in and sort it out'. As one parent stated: 'The teachers care deeply about the children, and they are very supportive and listen well to both the children and the parents.' Pupils have a secure understanding of online safety.

Inspection findings

- At the beginning of the inspection, we agreed that the focus would be on: effective challenge for pupils; how leaders make sure that disadvantaged pupils make strong progress; and how effectively leaders ensure that all groups of pupils, with different starting points, make rapid and sustained progress.
- During my visit, I saw clear evidence that teachers routinely challenge pupils, including the most able, across the curriculum. For example, in a Year 5 cross-curricular history and English lesson, pupils were learning about persuasive writing techniques. Acknowledging the centenary of women achieving the right to vote, pupils, in role as suffragettes, were composing protest speeches. Not only did this develop their historical and writing skills, it deepened their understanding of equality and empathy. Leaders have effectively designed the curriculum to ensure that it is not only creative and enriched, but also focused on developing pupils as responsible citizens. During inspection activities across the school, I

noticed many examples of high-quality artwork on display. The highly effective teaching of art, by a specialist teacher, contributes well to these high standards.

- Attainment is high in all year groups with large proportions of pupils attaining the higher standards. This is evident in pupils' books across all subjects. Pupils said that they are challenged and they know how to improve their work. While assessment is rigorous in English, mathematics and music, it is yet to be developed in other foundation subjects. You are building on the strong assessment principles built into your curriculum to ensure that assessment has a positive impact on pupils' progress in all subjects.
- Leaders have established a clear strategy to ensure that disadvantaged pupils achieve well. It is rooted in research findings and expert advice. Vulnerable pupils are provided with a range of additional support. Staff provide guidance for pupils' social and emotional development effectively. This is having a positive impact and is beginning to strengthen the progress of some disadvantaged pupils. Staff have a good understanding of the barriers to learning faced by disadvantaged pupils across the school. Leaders allocate pupil premium funding to agreed priorities. Knowledgeable and enthusiastic middle leaders have carefully analysed the impact of work in this area. They are passionate about strengthening progress further for this group of pupils. Assessment information shows that the current rate of progress for disadvantaged pupils is increasing. There are some examples of very rapid progress and, as a result, attainment is rising. However, the progress of disadvantaged pupils is inconsistent. It is not consistently strong in all subjects, in all year groups.
- High-attaining pupils and middle-attaining pupils make strong progress as evidenced in their books, as well as in the school's own assessment information. Recent changes to the teaching of mathematics have ensured that the understanding of mathematical concepts has deepened for these groups. Governors have an informed understanding of how well pupils are doing and use this information to hold leaders to account. However, leaders agreed that the teaching of low-attaining pupils is less effective and, as a result, these pupils make less progress than others.

Next steps for the school

Leaders and those responsible for governance should ensure that:

- the progress of disadvantaged pupils and low-attaining pupils is stronger so that their attainment rises rapidly
- assessment systems are developed in all subjects to closely track pupils' progress.

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

Yours sincerely

Lea Hannam
Ofsted Inspector

Information about the inspection

I met with you to discuss the school's effectiveness. Your deputy headteacher was in France with Year 6 pupils at the time of the inspection. We visited lessons to observe pupils' learning, talk to pupils and look at their work. Together, we looked at the quality of pupils' work in their books. I considered 51 responses from parents to the Ofsted's online questionnaire, Parent View, including 35 free-text comments. I spoke to parents at the beginning of the school day. I also had a telephone conversation with a representative from the local authority and met with two middle leaders.

Responses to the staff and pupils' questionnaires were also considered. I met with two governors and spoke to the chair of the governing body who joined us on a conference call. I had a formal meeting with a group of pupils to discuss their views about the school. I evaluated the school's safeguarding arrangements. A wide range of documents was examined, including: the school's self-evaluation; school improvement planning; information about pupils' progress; minutes of governing body meetings; the school's website; and various policies.