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Kerry Towndrow
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Dear Kerry Towndrow

Short inspection of Barlborough Primary School

Following my visit to the school on 23 February 2016, 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 May 2011.

This school continues to be good.

The leadership team has maintained the good quality of education in the school since the last inspection. Much has happened during that time, including your arrival as headteacher in 2013 and the recruitment of a new deputy headteacher in 2015. More recently, there has been some staffing instability due to the unforeseen absence of a number of teachers and the decision of others to accept roles elsewhere. You and the school's governing body have taken effective steps to address these issues and pupils have continued to thrive at the school. As a result, pupils' attainment in both Key Stage 1 and Key Stage 2 has risen over the last two years thanks to the strong progress they make during their time at the school.

Year 6 pupils I spoke to believe that their teachers are, 'better than anywhere else because they are kind and entertain, as well as educate'. Pupils are united in their praise for the school, regardless of their ability or background. They are elected to roles of responsibility and take these very seriously, whether it be as house captains or members of the school council. Such opportunities expose pupils to the fundamental British values of democracy and respect and begin to equip them to take their place in modern Britain.

Leaders and governors have acted effectively on the areas for improvement identified at the time of the last inspection. The provision in early years has improved, particularly outdoors. The teacher pinpoints resources and learning activities to meet specific areas of children's development, such as communication skills, which she has identified as being less strong. Links with local pre-school providers are positive, particularly in relation to the transition of children into the school. However, opportunities are missed to share good practice and compare standards with these providers at different points of the year.

There is no sense of complacency and school leaders are sensitive to any hint of underperformance, addressing it quickly and vigorously. Governors are tenacious in holding you and other school leaders to account for the outcomes of all pupils. They are particularly sensitive to the achievements of disadvantaged pupils and those with special educational needs or disability. Pupils of all abilities and backgrounds attain well at the end of Key Stages 1 and 2, with greater than average proportions reaching higher levels in reading, writing and mathematics. Pupils of all ages make strong progress, although work in books suggests that teachers are not always precise enough about the next steps in pupils' learning.

Safeguarding is effective.

Leaders and governors place a high priority on keeping children safe. Parents spoken to at the school gate and responses to Ofsted's online questionnaire, Parent View, are very positive about their children's safety at school. Year 6 pupils feel well supported by adults in school and believe that concerns placed in the school's worry boxes will always be resolved quickly and sensitively. This year has seen an increase in fixed-term exclusions for a very small minority of pupils. This action has not been taken lightly and documents show the steps taken by the school to support the pupils before and after these exclusions took place.

Leaders and governors ensure that all safeguarding arrangements meet requirements. Recording and reporting procedures are well organised. They are analysed regularly for trends and areas for improvement. The culture of openness between leaders and governors ensures that pupil welfare and parental concerns have a high priority and are standing items at governors' meetings. Governors and staff undertake regular training to ensure that their knowledge and practice are current.

Inspection findings

- Leaders and governors have an accurate understanding of the school's strengths and areas in need of further development. They have identified and are addressing improvement priorities within a thorough action plan. You monitor the plan regularly, reviewing actions to ensure that time and resources are not wasted. This has resulted in a more timely and effective allocation of support to pupils and a greater focus on the impact of this support on raising pupils' outcomes.
- The Chair of the Governing Body uses his local knowledge, alongside his wide-ranging professional and educational experience, to provide effective leadership to the governing body. He has a very good understanding of the school because you meet with him regularly and share relevant information in great detail. Governors ask challenging questions that hold you and your leadership team to account for the progress of every pupil. Like you and your staff, governors are ambitious for the school and its pupils, taking their responsibilities very seriously. Information from governors' meetings indicates that there is a high degree of openness, transparency and sharing of information on your part. This means that governors have a very accurate picture of pupil performance and behaviour, along with parental views and opinions.
- The vast majority of parents are positive about the school. There is an annual survey to ensure that school leaders keep in touch with parental views. Documents show how these views are used to improve the school and the efforts you take to respond to parents, particularly where views are less favourable. A good example of this was your response to concerns over homework. You issued a further survey to gain additional information but, despite requests, parents who had expressed dissatisfaction were reluctant to join a working party to consider the matter in greater depth.
- Leaders review the performance of every pupil regularly through lesson observations, work scrutiny and ongoing assessment. They hold teachers accountable for each pupil's performance at termly review meetings. However, you assess the impact of support programmes much more frequently, adjusting or replacing them as soon as it is apparent that they are not effective enough. This approach is ensuring that the least-able pupils, along with those who are disadvantaged or have special educational needs or disability, continue to make strong progress in reading, writing and mathematics.

- Historically, children have entered the early years provision at levels of development that were broadly typical for their age. However, current information shows that for the last two years, children have entered at levels below those that are typical. There is compelling evidence from assessments taken when they join the school to confirm this view. In 2015, the proportion of children reaching a good level of development was in line with national figures but below that seen in 2014. You responded quickly to this dip in performance, taking action to prevent a repeat. Evidence seen in children's learning journey documents and their workbooks suggests that your actions have been both timely and effective in accelerating children's progress for the current Reception class. Leaders and the class teacher have identified particular areas of development which are less strong when children enter the early years provision, for example moving and handling skills and communication. There are measures in place to support the transition of children from their pre-school setting. However, the school has not been active enough in working with these settings to address weaker developmental areas at an early stage.
- In 2015, achievement in the Year 1 screening check for phonics (the sounds that letters represent) exceeded the national figure, showing an increase from the previous year. Pupils' attainment at the end of Key Stage 1 and Key Stage 2 exceeded national averages, particularly at higher levels of attainment. This represented an improving picture in the years since 2013. Boys and girls achieve equally well by the end of Key Stage 2. Information for disadvantaged pupils is unreliable due to small cohort numbers, although their performance in reading is not as strong as in writing and mathematics. Pupils with special educational needs or disability achieve less well in mathematics. The most-able pupils make strong progress during their time in Key Stage 2. School assessment information shows that the vast majority of pupils' attainment is at least in line with that expected for their age. Work in pupils' books supports this view. Teachers mark to the school's policy but they are not consistent enough in identifying and communicating the next steps in pupils' learning. As a result, pupils are not making as much progress as they could.
- The vast majority of pupils behave well at different times of the day. When I toured the school, pupils were generally engaged in their work. There was a buzz of excitement in a number of classes as pupils undertook tasks that captured their imagination. For example, in a class of pupils in Years 3 and 4, pupils were calculating the area of compound shapes in the context of laying carpet for Harry Potter at Hogwarts School. By Year 6, pupils are able to have well-developed conversations about what they have learned, showing respect and consideration for the views of others. They are able to share mature opinions about their time at school, identifying strengths and areas for improvement such as the need for a more reliable internet-based homework platform; this is a view shared by parents. The school's curriculum and values prepare pupils well for life in modern Britain as well as supporting their spiritual, moral, social and cultural development.

Next steps for the school

Leaders and those responsible for governance should ensure that:

- teachers identify and communicate the next steps in pupils' learning with greater precision to ensure that pupils fully understand how they can improve their work further
- the range of partnership work carried out by the school is extended, particularly before children enter the early years provision, to help maintain the drive for further and continued school improvement.

I am copying this letter to the Chair of the Governing Body, the Regional Schools Commissioner and the Director of Children's Services for Derbyshire County Council. This letter will be published on the Ofsted website.

Yours sincerely

Stephen McMullan
Her Majesty's Inspector

Information about the inspection

During the inspection, I met with you, the Chair of the Governing Body, a representative from the local authority, parents, and pupils from Year 6. I considered responses of parents from Parent View and from staff through the online survey they completed. We visited all classes in the school, spending a short time in each, and looked at a sample of pupils' work together. I looked at a range of documents, including an evaluation of the school's performance and plans for further improvement, information on how the pupil premium is spent and a number of policy documents, including those for child protection and special educational needs.