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Dear Mrs Denham

Short inspection of Bracebridge Infant and Nursery 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 your predecessor school was judged to be good in November 2011.

This school continues to be good.

The leadership team has maintained the good quality of education provided by the school since the last inspection. The school is a vibrant learning environment where happy pupils work and play together, and behave very well. Classrooms and corridors are bright places where pupils' work is shown proudly and the displays reflect the school's values and high expectations, as well as celebrating different cultures and faiths. Staff teach pupils to respect others different from themselves and the curriculum prepares pupils well for life in modern Britain.

You have ensured that your staff have adapted well to the changing intake of the school. There are now many more pupils arriving with little or no English and with skills on entry below or well below those found typically in pupils of the same age. Nevertheless, the pupils are receiving a good education and make good progress from their starting points because they are well taught and supported. After a fall in results last year, outcomes in the early years are set to rise and pupils in Year 2 are on track to leave the school with attainment approaching national averages. Teachers support disadvantaged pupils effectively and, as a result, these pupils achieve particularly well compared with their peers.

Last year you noted that levels of attendance were falling and that the proportion of pupils who were persistently absent was rising to be above the national average. You ensured that everyone made clear to all families the importance of good

attendance. You also worked effectively with those parents whose children were not attending regularly enough. As a result, attendance has improved considerably.

Staff are incredibly united. They were all very keen to tell me how proud they are to work at the school and how they all meet weekly to share information and ideas to help each other improve. This results in a consistent approach to teaching and ensures that pupils' behaviour is managed consistently well. Pupils listen carefully to adults, work hard and do their best in lessons. They move about the school in a calm and orderly manner. Staff feel particularly strongly that you support them well and always treat them fairly. Those employed at the school at the time of the last inspection confirm that Bracebridge has continued to improve. As one explained, 'It's the best it's ever been.' Another added, 'Our team has never been stronger.'

Parents are highly supportive of the school and your leadership. The overwhelming majority of those who responded to Parent View believe that the school is well led and managed and that their children make good progress because of good teaching. Parents confirmed unanimously that they would recommend the school to others.

During the inspection, we visited all of the classrooms together and looked at samples of pupils' work. These show that pupils are making good progress overall. Pupils complete their work neatly and they are learning effectively the skills they need to catch up. However, pupils in Key Stage 1 are not given enough opportunities to write at greater length in subjects other than English. In addition, the most-able pupils are currently not making as much progress as they could in mathematics. This is because they do not have regular enough opportunities to deepen their mathematical understanding by tackling more challenging problems.

Your school development plan is focused on the correct priorities to improve the school further. However, you agree that it is not as effective as it needs to be. This is because it does not make clear enough when staff must complete each action and, in addition, does not state how improvements will be checked, when, and by whom. This poses the risk that action may not take place on time, or have the impact it should.

Safeguarding is effective.

You and your staff give the highest priority to keeping pupils safe. Staff are well trained, including in areas of recent concern nationally, such as the dangers associated with extremism and radicalisation. Your school policy sets out clearly for staff the indicators of potential abuse of pupils, and staff know they must report any areas of concern immediately. Governors also ensure that good systems are in place to ensure that pupils are safe. The single central register is fit for purpose.

During my visit, I examined with you a sample of case files for vulnerable pupils for whom you had made referrals to external agencies, such as social care. These were clearly and systematically maintained, and of high quality. They demonstrate that you take prompt action to protect pupils, while working as closely with families as possible. Pupils I met during my visit were keen to tell me that they felt very safe at

Bracebridge. They felt that they could easily tell a grown-up in school if they were worried about anything, and said that teachers taught them how to stay safe, for example from strangers and traffic.

Inspection findings

- You and the governing body rightly judge the school to be good. Your self-evaluation document is thorough and your judgements come from a careful consideration of a range of evidence seen in classrooms and pupils' books over time. From this, you are able to identify what the school does well and what it needs to do to improve further. Governors support you and other staff well, while holding you to account and challenging you to get better still. However, the school development plan is not sufficiently effective in promoting improvement because, while the actions you have set out are correct, you have not made it clear when each one should be completed. The plan also does not state how actions will be monitored, or ensure who will do this, and when. This means there is a risk that the pace of further improvement may be slower than it should be.
- You agree that, last year, a majority of children did not leave the early years with a good level of development. Pupils also left the school with levels of attainment that were significantly lower than the national average in writing and mathematics. This is because a considerable, and increasing, number enter the school with skills, knowledge and understanding at levels that are below or well below those found typically in children of the same age. The proportion of pupils arriving at the school who speak English as an additional language is increasing rapidly. In 2014, for example, it was around one in five pupils. By 2015, this had grown to around one in three pupils. Many of these pupils arrive with little or no English. However, the latest information provided by the school shows that pupils make good progress and that attainment, while still low, is rising convincingly. An increasing number of pupils are achieving the standards of attainment expected for their age and more pupils are now on track to exceed these standards. As a result, the school predicts confidently that a majority of children will leave the early years with a good level of development this summer. In addition, pupils in Year 2 are now on track to attain in line with the national average. The strongest improvement is in writing, which is where pupils' skills are weakest to begin with.
- The gap between the achievement of disadvantaged pupils and others in the school and those nationally has narrowed quickly over the past three years. Last year, disadvantaged pupils at Year 2 achieved better than their peers in all subjects, and their outcomes were much closer to other pupils in England than previously. This is because you direct pupil premium funding very effectively and precisely to ensure it meets the specific needs of individual pupils.
- Classrooms are orderly, bright learning environments where children listen carefully to what is being taught, follow instructions and work hard. In the

early years, we saw children in the Nursery busily involved in imaginative play together, pretending to be poorly at a doctors' surgery. Other children were concentrating on improving their counting using a tablet computer, or learning ways to cut up tomatoes and potatoes to make a soup. Reception children had drawn castles on the whiteboard and were then making them from play bricks, while others were predicting accurately the sequence of colours when making a pattern using cubes. In Year 1, pupils were learning to improve their use of adjectives through the story of the 'Three Little Pigs'. One pupil had written 'The wolf is sneaky' and another had added, 'He has a big, wet, curly nose.' In Year 2, pupils were also busy writing creative letters to explain why the arrival of aliens at their front door had meant they were late for school that day. Pupils were writing with increasing accuracy and confidence. There are high-quality displays in all classrooms and corridors that support pupils' learning by showing them what they need to improve, and how to do this.

- The curriculum is both broad and balanced, and teaches pupils fundamental British values. For example, pupils learn the importance of democracy by electing school council members who have secured better playground equipment and convinced governors to buy an outdoor 'trim trail' for everyone. The school is linked to a kindergarten in Tangshan, China, and pupils are taught about, and to respect, other cultures and faiths. Pupils warmly welcome those pupils who join the school from overseas.
- Pupils' books and the learning journals that I examined during my visit confirm that children enter at considerably lower levels than typically seen in those of a similar age, but that their progress is good from their starting points. Attainment is improving. However, the most-able pupils are not making the progress they should in mathematics because staff do not yet give them sufficient opportunities in lessons to deepen their understanding of mathematical ideas. As a result, these pupils are not achieving the highest standards of attainment. In addition, pupils' writing skills in subjects other than English are underdeveloped.
- Parents who responded to Parent View, Ofsted's online questionnaire, expressed very strong support for the school and its staff. One parent explained that 'the teachers are the best you could ask for'. Another summed up the views of many others by saying, 'I am very happy with all aspects of the school, so much so that we wished it went on until Year 6.' Parents whose children have specific needs had particularly warm praise for how staff had helped their child and met their needs.
- Attendance is rising after you took appropriate action to reverse the sudden decline last year. In 2015, attendance fell from the high previous figure of almost 96% to below the national average. A considerable number of pupils were persistently absent. As a result, you ensured that all staff sent out a clear and continual message to all parents, reinforced on your school website, that you expected all pupils to attend unless there was genuine illness or there were exceptional reasons. You also undertook increased work with the families of those pupils who were not attending sufficiently and put

in place support for them. As a result, attendance has improved and it is once again above the national average. There are currently no pupils of compulsory school age who are persistently absent.

Next steps for the school

Leaders and governors should ensure that:

- the school development plan is improved so that it is clear when all actions should take place, along with who will check that these have been completed, when and how
- pupils' outcomes continue to improve by:
 - giving pupils in Key Stage 1 more opportunities to write at length across the curriculum
 - giving the most-able pupils regular, challenging problems to solve in order to deepen their understanding of mathematics.

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

Yours sincerely

Roary Pownall
Her Majesty's Inspector

Information about the inspection

During the inspection, I met with you, representatives of the governing body and the joint subject leader for English and mathematics, as well as the leader of the early years. We visited all classes to observe teaching and learning. I looked at pupils' work and examined learning journals for pupils in the early years. I observed pupils' behaviour in lessons and met with groups of them at breaktime. I considered the views of 29 parents posted on Ofsted's online survey, Parent View and met parents at the end of the school day. I read a range of documents, including the school's self-evaluation, your school development plan and information on outcomes for pupils currently in the school. I visited the after-school club, which is maintained by the governing body, to check that pupils were safe there. I studied information related to attendance and examined safeguarding records and policies.