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Mrs S J Pearson
Headteacher
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Dear Mrs Pearson

Short inspection of Barnston Primary School

Following my visit to the school on 19 April 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 April 2011.

This school continues to be good.

The leadership team has maintained the good quality of education in the school since the last inspection. Your ambition for the pupils, staff and the school shines through in all that you do. No stone is left unturned to ensure that all pupils reach their full potential, both academically and socially. The close-knit family atmosphere that you have created within the school is evident in relationships at all levels.

The vast majority of parents, unreservedly, give you their full support. They consider you to be an 'excellent' leader and find your staff 'approachable' and innovative in the way they 'go out of their way to make all topics fun, interesting and memorable'. Parents who have children with special educational needs were very keen to tell me about the excellent support they receive from all your staff and the good progress that their children make. They also commented favourably about the settling-in procedures that the school has in place for children starting school life in the Reception class. Parents describe these procedures as 'seamless'. The workshops and school events that you provide to help parents support their children's learning at home are also greatly appreciated.

In consultation with children, and under the steer of your deputy headteacher, the school's approach to managing behaviour has been revised to good effect. The standards of behaviour that I observed in classes, in school corridors and in the dining hall were impeccable. Children are very proud of their school and display a real thirst for knowledge. For example, in the Reception class, children excitedly told

me about the story they were writing. Others giggled with delight as they very carefully used tweezers to pick up very small objects, while their friends were solving mathematical problems and engaging in meaningful role play. Children enjoy being members of school councils and the responsibility it brings. I was particularly impressed by a 'human rights' council, which is run by Year 6 pupils. Under their leadership, pupils explore topics such as racism, homophobic bullying and the refugee crisis. British values are very well embedded, ensuring that pupils are equipped with the skills to be responsible citizens in modern Britain.

At your last inspection a number of issues were raised which you and your staff team have addressed. As a result, staff make better use of assessment systems to ensure that the needs of most groups of pupils are met. The quality of marking is good and pupils are provided with guidance on how to improve their work. Basic skills in literacy, numeracy and information and communications technology (ICT) are now embedded into the curriculum.

Safeguarding is effective.

High priority is put on keeping pupils safe. The leadership team has ensured that all safeguarding arrangements are fit for purpose and records are detailed and of high quality. All your staff, including those with responsibility for safeguarding and recruitment, have completed appropriate training. Staff talked to me confidently about procedures they would follow should they be concerned about a pupil's welfare. They are also aware of risks such as radicalisation and child sexual exploitation. The school site is safe and the identification of visitors is closely checked. The single central record is compliant and meets current requirements. You recognise the link between poor attendance and potential safeguarding issues. As a result, attendance is closely monitored.

Children told me that they feel safe in school and that instances of bullying are rare. They are aware of the different types of bullying, and of e-safety. Assemblies and 'circle time' are used to good effect to make pupils aware of keeping themselves safe.

Inspection findings

- You are relentless in your pursuit of excellence. I soon became very aware that you have a clear understanding of your school's strengths and priorities for improvement. You communicate your vision of the school to your staff in a calm and encouraging manner. Under your leadership all groups of pupils, including the most able, make good progress in their learning. However, from observing lessons, looking at samples of pupils' work and listening to pupils read, we agreed that those pupils who grasp new concepts quickly are not always given enough challenge to deepen their learning further.
- Your staff work well as a team and morale is high. You ensure that talent within your staff team is nurtured. Staff commented that Barnston Primary is a 'fantastic school' where 'everyone is encouraged to achieve their best'. Newly qualified teachers also told me of the good levels of support they

- are afforded.
- The quality of teaching is closely monitored through formal lesson observations, book scrutinies and learning walks. Teachers appreciate the helpful advice that you offer them to develop their skills alongside the available training opportunities. The peer-coaching system enables more experienced staff to share their skills with those newer to the profession.
 - You monitor the performance of teaching assistants with the same rigour. They are a valuable asset to your school. However, we both agree that they are not always well deployed at the beginning of a lesson, specifically in key stage 1.
 - Subject leaders are passionate about their curriculum areas of responsibility and offer you good levels of support. The roles of the literacy and numeracy coordinators are well embedded. However, the roles of some other new foundation subject leaders are not as well developed.
 - You work effectively with a group of schools locally and as far afield as Cumbria to challenge each other and share good practice. Working with these schools you have taken a lead role in devising an assessment system without levels. This system is being implemented in your school and helping teachers to show progress in pupils' learning, in line with current guidelines.
 - The number of disadvantaged pupils attending your school is low. Therefore, published data for this group of pupils is too limited to make meaningful comparisons. However, you ensure that the pupil premium money is spent wisely to provide academic support. The school's tracking system shows that these children make good progress, perform as well as their peers and they take an active part in all that the school has to offer.
 - The school website is easy to navigate, bright and informative. Parents find it a useful source of information. However, in some areas we agree that it is not compliant; the special educational needs (SEN) information report has not been updated since 2014 and governors' pecuniary interests and a record of attendance at board and committee meetings over the last academic year have been omitted. Furthermore, information on the curriculum for each year group and subjects lacks some detail.
 - Governors know the school well and are clear about its strengths and where it needs to improve further. They offer you support and challenge in equal measure.

Next steps for the school

Leaders and those responsible for governance should ensure that:

- the most-able pupils are consistently challenged with work that deepens their learning
- the roles of new subject leaders are embedded to ensure that they have a greater impact on teaching
- teaching assistants, specifically at key stage 1, are deployed effectively at all times to support pupils in their learning
- the website is compliant and is regularly monitored to ensure that it remains so.

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

Yours sincerely

Sheila Iwaskow
Her Majesty's Inspector

Information about the inspection

During the inspection I held meetings with you, the deputy headteacher, middle leaders, four members of the governing body and a representative from the local authority. I also had informal discussions with a group of parents, staff and pupils from key stages 1 and 2 to seek their views of the school. I went on a tour of the school accompanied by you and visited classrooms to see the learning that was taking place. I looked at examples of pupils' work, listened to pupils read and observed their behaviour during lessons and as they moved around the school. I reviewed a range of documentation including the single central record, the school's self-evaluation, the school's development plan and records relating to the monitoring of teaching and learning. I also took account of the responses to Parent View, the online Ofsted questionnaire, completed by parents and of the school's own questionnaires to parents and pupils.