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Ms Claire Britnell
Headteacher
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Dear Ms Britnell

Short inspection of Giles Brook School

Following my visit to the school on 7 June 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 November 2011.

This school continues to be good.

The school is a welcoming and friendly place. Pupils enjoy coming to school and benefit from strong teaching, a stimulating curriculum and the rich variety of lunchtime and after-school clubs on offer. An industrious atmosphere permeates lessons. Pupils forge positive relationships with their teachers and other pupils in their class. They relish learning and are keen to find out more. They achieve well and take pride in their work. Standards of presentation are markedly high. Pupils' behaviour is exemplary in lessons and around the school site, where they play and socialise happily together. Pupils feel safe and well cared for. They learn how to keep themselves safe and healthy, and respect people regardless of any differences. Parents highly praise the school and the care staff take to listen and ensure that any area of concern is dealt with.

When the school was last inspected, the inspectors recognised the many strengths of the school including in leadership, teaching, pupils' achievement and behaviour. The inspectors identified some areas for specific attention. One was to raise achievement in mathematics. A second was to make better use of assessment data to establish clear priorities for improvement. Developing the governors' role in monitoring and evaluating the work of the school was a further area for attention. Leaders have worked effectively to improve outcomes in mathematics. Improved teaching combined with more rigorous monitoring and support ensures that pupils, including the most able, receive suitably challenging work and typically make strong progress. Governors have improved their understanding of the school's performance and hold you and other leaders to account increasingly well. Over time leaders have made

effective use of assessment information to identify areas for attention and tackle them. Leaders acted swiftly to ensure no momentum was lost with the introduction of the new national curriculum. Suitable arrangements are in place for assessing and collecting information about pupils' achievement in English and mathematics in line with new requirements. However, leaders' analysis of the information they collect is not routinely incisive. Governors consider detailed numerical information rather than a precise evaluation of how strong pupils' achievement is and if it is improving over time. Consequently leaders and governors do not have a consistently sharp understanding of the starting point or the exact impact that actions to raise achievement should have to move it to outstanding.

Leaders have worked effectively with staff to establish an engaging and stimulating curriculum. Pupils study subjects through interesting topics that capture their interest and motivate them to learn well. Leaders have made sure that curriculum plans define which aspects of each subject should be taught in which topic and year. However, leaders have not defined the exact level of skill and depth of knowledge pupils should achieve by the end of each topic in each subject. Neither have they checked that topic plans enable pupils to build skills and knowledge in all subjects progressively as they move through the school. Additionally the school's approach for assessing pupils' progress in subjects other than in English and mathematics in line with the new curriculum is at a relatively early stage. You rightly identify attending to these matters as a priority for the school.

Safeguarding is effective.

Leaders have made sure that all safeguarding arrangements are fit for purpose and records are detailed and of high quality. Leaders work effectively with parents and outside agencies to keep pupils safe and reduce risk of harm. Checks on the suitability of staff are sound. Staff receive appropriate training, including how to identify and deal with any risk of radicalisation pupils may face. Staff and parents know who to speak to if they have any safety-related concern.

Bullying is rare. When it does occur, staff tackle it effectively. Pupils learn about bullying and how to keep safe in personal, social and health education lessons and assemblies. They know to treat others with respect and avoid prejudiced behaviour that may cause others to feel unsafe.

Inspection findings

- Governors have effectively reviewed and developed the way they work. They have identified skills gaps and recruited governors with expertise in education, business and finance. They have increased their knowledge of the school through formal visits and hold leaders to account increasingly well.
- Over time leaders and governors have made good use of information they collect about the school's performance to identify and tackle areas for attention. Improvement priorities are suitably focused and the school is increasingly effective.
- Governors routinely consider information provided by leaders about pupils' achievement. However, leaders' evaluation of assessment information is not

consistently sharp. Governors typically consider detailed numerical information rather than a truly incisive evaluation of pupils' achievement and how much it is improving over time. As a result, leaders and governors do not have a completely precise understanding of the impact of improvement work on pupils' achievement or precisely what needs addressing to raise achievement to outstanding.

- Leaders have developed robust systems for checking the progress of individual pupils in English and mathematics. Leaders meet regularly with teachers to review pupils' progress and ensure suitable support is in place to help any pupil who is falling behind catch up.
- Leaders have acted swiftly to ensure that sound approaches are in place for assessing pupils' achievement in English and mathematics to meet new national curriculum requirements. Plans for assessing other subjects in line with the new national curriculum are at a comparatively early stage.
- Leaders have adapted the curriculum to cover new national curriculum requirements. Pupils develop their subject skills and knowledge through interesting topic work. Leaders have identified which aspects of each subject should be covered in each topic and teachers plan their lessons accordingly. However, leaders have not set out the exact level of skills and knowledge pupils should acquire in each subject as they move from topic to topic. As a result, it is not clear if topic plans promote outstanding progress across subjects over time.
- Teachers plan lessons that help pupils learn effectively, providing suitable levels of challenge for pupils of varying abilities. Pupils are able to jump straight to the more challenging tasks when they are ready so they are not held back doing work that is too easy. Teachers use questioning well to help pupils grasp the learning and overcome misconceptions.
- Children in the Reception class benefit from a rich and stimulating environment. The atmosphere is calm and purposeful. Careful planning creates an array of opportunities for pupils to initiate their own learning and develop their early writing and mathematical skills. Staff provide structure and support as needed and ask questions to help children develop their curiosity and understanding.
- The proportion of children reaching a good level of development by the end of the Reception Year has increased over time. In 2013 it was in line with the national average, whereas in 2015 it was noticeably above the national figure. The proportion of children on track to reach a good level of development this summer is high.
- Teaching of phonics is effective and has improved notably since 2013. Almost all pupils reached the expected standard in 2015 whereas one pupil in four did not reach the expected standard in 2013.
- Pupils achieve well in English and mathematics. Over the last three years attainment by the end of key stage 1 has been consistently high in English and in line with the national figure in mathematics. Pupils build well on this at key stage 2. Over time, pupils' progress in reading, writing and mathematics by the end of key stage 2 has been at least in line with the national average. Pupils currently in the school achieve increasingly well. School information shows that pupils' attainment in mathematics at key stage 1 is now as high as it is in English.

- On average, girls and boys make equal progress by the end of key stage 2. However, some variation exists. In 2015 girls' attainment in mathematics was in line with the national figure whilst boys' achievement was higher. School information shows that gaps between these two groups are increasingly small.
- The small group of disadvantaged pupils in the school typically achieve as well as their peers. Leaders know these pupils very well and make sure they receive the teaching and support necessary to make good progress. The same applies for pupils with special educational needs.
- The most-able pupils make good progress. Teachers provide a 'hot' challenge which enables these pupils to deepen their knowledge and skills. The proportion of most-able pupils making good progress by the end of key stage 2 was in line with the national figure in 2015. School information shows that the most-able pupils in the school make similarly good progress.
- The school website is helpful and informative. However, the school does not meet requirements on the publication of specified information on its website. The physical education and sport premium statement does not report the impact on participation and attainment or explain how leaders will make sure the improvements are sustainable. The pupil premium statement does not provide a rationale for the way the money is spent. Information on where to find the local offer, support services for parents or how the school evaluates the effectiveness of its provision are omitted from the special educational needs information report. Information about governors does not include the structure and responsibilities of the governing body.

Next steps for the school

Leaders and those responsible for governance should ensure that:

- The curriculum enables pupils to consistently build on previous learning in science and foundation subjects and make outstanding progress as they progress from topic to topic and year to year.
- Assessment of pupils' progress in subjects other than English and mathematics is developed so that teachers and leaders know exactly how well pupils are achieving in each subject.
- Leaders' evaluation of pupil's achievement is incisive so leaders and governors know precisely how strong achievement is and can define the precise impact required of leaders' work to raise achievement to outstanding.
- The school website fully meets government requirements.

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

Yours sincerely

Diana Choulerton
Her Majesty's Inspector

Information about the inspection

I met with you, other leaders, the chair of the governing body and four other governors. We visited parts of 10 lessons. I scrutinised a selection of pupils' mathematics and topic work together with key stage leaders. I took account of 40 pupil survey responses, 47 staff survey responses and 128 responses by parents to Ofsted's online questionnaire, Parent View. In addition, I considered 77 parent responses by free text. I spoke with pupils and staff at break and lunchtime. I analysed a range of the school's documentation, including leaders' checks on pupils' progress, and safeguarding policies and procedures. We discussed your own evaluation of the school's effectiveness.