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Mr Damien Turrell  
Headteacher  
Brownlow Primary School  
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Dear Mr Turrell

### **Short inspection of Brownlow Primary School**

Following my visit to the school on 10 January 2017, 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 predecessor school was judged to be good in September 2011.

#### **This school continues to be good.**

The leadership team has maintained the good quality of education in the school since the last inspection.

Through your strong and proficient leadership, you have continued to improve outcomes for children in the Reception Year and increased the proportion of pupils reaching nationally expected levels and above at the end of both key stages. Leaders and governors have worked hard to raise attainment in writing in key stage 2. In 2016, pupils made good progress and reached standards above national averages in this subject.

You and the school's other governors know the school well. You have used accurate self-evaluation to identify clear priorities for the school improvement plan. These priorities are based firmly on the use of published performance information, which compares how well different groups of pupils at the school are doing against other pupils nationally. The school improvement plan provides a well-judged set of actions and associated success criteria by which governors and other stakeholders can measure progress.

You track pupils' progress rigorously. This enables leaders at all levels to take action when it is needed, for example to ensure that pupils receive any extra support they need to catch up. You are rightly focusing your attention on raising achievement where it is weaker. This approach is making a noticeable contribution to the good progress being made by all pupils.

Pupils' achievement at the end of key stage 2 is strong, with pupils attaining above the national averages in reading, writing and mathematics. The proportion passing the Year 1 phonics screening check is above the national average. At the end of key stage 1, standards are broadly average but higher for middle-attaining pupils. However, pupils who have lower starting points have not made the same progress as similar pupils nationally. You acknowledge that, in 2016, too few of the disadvantaged pupils in each key stage made enough progress. You are beginning to tackle this using a range of strategies and have raised the profile of this group of pupils within the school.

You have strengthened the senior leadership team. This larger team is taking a more active role in checking the quality of teaching and learning, and in monitoring pupils' progress. This has increased the school's capacity to drive forward improvements. All staff are rigorously held to account through the use of systematic procedures and frequent, robust discussions about the quality of teaching, learning and pupils' progress.

Teachers have high expectations and plan interesting learning activities that engage pupils in their work. They use assessment information effectively to identify and plan for pupils' needs in each lesson. Sometimes pupils are not moved on to more challenging work quickly enough, however. When this happens, pupils do not make the progress they should.

The pupils I spoke with were articulate, confident and polite. They were eager to tell me about their learning and to explain to me what it is like to be a pupil at the school. They told me that they enjoy all their lessons because teachers make them fun. Pupils' attitudes to their work are good. They are keen to engage in their learning and try hard to do their best. They present their work neatly and take pride in the work they produce. Pupils told me how they like to receive a 'special mention' from the headteacher and how they aim to receive one of these each term.

Support from the academy trust and school governing body is highly effective. Governors are committed to the school and are making a valuable contribution to the school's improvement. They use the detailed insight they gain from the information you provide and from their visits to the school to hold you and other senior leaders to account.

Parents and carers express good levels of satisfaction in all aspects of the school's work and an overwhelming majority of the staff are highly supportive of the leadership team. Pupils, parents and staff are all very proud to be a part of Brownlow Primary School.

You are not complacent about the success of your actions or the high quality of your leadership and you place a high importance on continued improvement. The achievements you have had demonstrate both good leadership and the school's capacity for improvement in the future.

You agreed that the school is not yet outstanding because, while teachers match the work they set for pupils closely to their needs, different groups of pupils do not make consistently good progress and reach the standards they should. You have a well-formed view of where these variations in progress remain among groups of pupils, such as the occasional dips in the progress being made by disadvantaged pupils. You recognise that these variations need to be remedied and have rigorous plans in place to tackle them. Furthermore, you acknowledge that work leading to the recent reduction in the number of pupils being excluded from the school is not fully complete.

The school meets requirements on the publication of specified information on its website.

### **Safeguarding is effective.**

Safeguarding is given a high priority in Brownlow Primary School. Leaders diligently apply procedures to ensure that pupils are kept safe and secure in school. All the proper checks on staff and visitors are carried out. Staff have a clear understanding of potential risks and know how to deal with any concerns. Pupils are well known to staff. Safeguarding referrals are made in a timely manner and concerns followed up appropriately. Pupils receive effective support through strong working relationships between the school, external agencies and the local authority. Records are meticulously maintained.

Pupils told the inspector that they feel safe at the school. They know that there is always someone they can talk with, including other pupils, and are confident that they are listened to. Pupils are adamant that incidents of bullying are extremely rare in their school. They know that if any incident were to arise that it would be dealt with immediately. Learning opportunities provided through the school's curriculum help pupils develop good knowledge about how to keep themselves safe in a range of situations. The overwhelming majority of parents, through Ofsted's online questionnaire (Parent View) and the school's own surveys, agree that their children are safe and well cared for.

### **Inspection findings**

- Children enter the Reception Year with abilities typical for their age in most areas of learning. They achieve well in the early years and increased proportions have attained a good level of development year on year. Children now leave the Reception Year with broadly average attainment. Their abilities in reading and writing when they join the school are well below those that are typical for their age. Progress in both reading and writing is rapid and by the time children move to Year 1, they have caught up with national figures in both of these learning goals.
- The quality of teaching in the early years is good. The children are supported by a team of dedicated and skilled adults who use a variety of resources and approaches to secure good progress. Staff use probing questions to draw out and check children's understanding of what they are learning.

- Routines are clear and the children's behaviour is excellent. The children cooperate and play well together. The learning environment is stimulating and thoughtfully organised, both indoors and outdoors. Staff provide activities that capture the children's curiosity and stimulate their natural instinct to learn. However, some children in Reception classes are ready to be moved on to harder work more quickly.
- The school's performance information for current pupils indicates that, overall, pupils are making good progress and increased numbers of pupils are on track to achieve age-related expectations and a greater depth of learning at the end of this year in all the different year groups. In 2016, the attainment of pupils by the end of key stage 1 was broadly average in reading, writing and mathematics. However, lower-attaining pupils did not do as well. Leaders have identified this weakness and are taking action to improve outcomes for this group of pupils. Lower-ability pupils benefit from additional resources and a more rigid structure to their learning. Performance records now indicate that lower-attaining pupils are making better progress. In key stage 1, they are making good progress in reading and mathematics. The readers I listened to were confident and enjoyed reading. They used their phonics skills successfully and could explain clearly what they were reading about. In key stage 2, the vast majority of the pupils in different year groups are making good progress in reading, writing and mathematics. Leaders are taking action to tackle the occasional dips that are still occurring.
- School leaders check on the progress of disadvantaged pupils closely, and carefully evaluate the support they are given. The difference in the progress being made by disadvantaged pupils and others pupils nationally has been reduced. The impact of leaders' work to bring this about has been most effective in writing, where the differences have been eliminated. The differences in reading and mathematics are also now diminishing. Leaders recognise that there are still inconsistencies in disadvantaged pupils' outcomes, however, and that there is more work to be done to iron out the dips in attainment for different year groups and across different subjects.
- Pupils benefit from a balanced and varied curriculum. The progress they make in different subjects is tracked by leaders to ensure that they achieve well in each subject. Disadvantaged pupils are making similar progress to others in the school in a range of other subjects.
- Pupils' attendance continues to be broadly average. Leaders are working hard to improve attendance rates for disadvantaged pupils or those who have special educational needs and/or disabilities. The persistent absence of a small number of pupils, however, means that a notable improvement in attendance has yet to be seen.

- Pupils' behaviour in class is characterised by positive attitudes and respectful relationships. Their behaviour around the school site is of a very high standard. Historically, the number of pupils excluded from the school has been in line with national figures. However, the number of disadvantaged pupils and pupils who have special educational needs and/or disabilities who have been excluded from the school is higher than national figures. Fixed-term exclusions remained high last year as a result of a very small number of pupils who have more challenging behaviour.
- Effective action taken by leaders has dramatically reduced the number of fixed-term exclusions this year so far. No pupil has been permanently excluded from the school over the last 18 months.

### **Next steps for the school**

Leaders and those responsible for governance should ensure that:

- the increasing rate of progress for disadvantaged pupils is maintained and that the remaining differences between the performance of disadvantaged pupils and that of other pupils nationally are eliminated
- teachers help pupils make even better progress by moving them on to the harder work more quickly
- the school continues to support pupils who have more challenging behavioural needs and sustains the reduced number of fixed-term exclusions from the school.

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

Yours sincerely

Vondra Mays  
**Ofsted Inspector**

### **Information about the inspection**

During the inspection, I held meetings with you, the deputy headteacher, the assistant headteacher and members of the governing body and academy trustees. You and I made a series of visits to lessons in each key stage. I spoke with a group of pupils and listened to pupils read from Year 2 and Year 4.

In addition, I considered a range of documents, including the school's self-evaluation, the school's improvement plan, records relating to pupils' attendance and exclusions, and information on pupils' attainment and progress.

I looked at how effectively the pupil premium grant was being used. I also examined the school's website to check that it meets requirements on the publication of specified information. Safeguarding practices were also reviewed. I considered the views of 59 parents posted on Ofsted's online survey, Parent View, including 34 free-text responses, as well as the school's own parental surveys.

This short inspection focused on whether:

- leaders were taking effective action to address weaker outcomes in the early years, especially in reading
- disadvantaged pupils were making good progress in different subjects across the curriculum
- lower-attaining pupils in key stage 1 were being supported well enough to help them catch up and attain highly
- attendance was improving and exclusions were reducing for disadvantaged pupils and pupils who have special educational needs and/or disabilities
- safeguarding was effective and pupils are safe.