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8 March 2017

Mr Robin Brown
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Dear Mr Brown

Short inspection of Brookdale Primary School

Following my visit to the school on 14 February 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 school was judged to be good in September 2012.

This school continues to be good.

The leadership team has maintained the good quality of education since the last inspection. Since arriving at the school, you have provided determined and confident leadership. Following a difficult period for the school, you have united governors, staff and parents in their commitment to do their best for the pupils. Your vision and plans for the school are ambitious and well considered. Your evaluation of how the school is performing is accurate and honest. You have ensured that your leadership team is clear about what makes the school successful, but also know what still needs to be improved. Development planning focuses on the current priorities for improvement, which are shared with and understood by all staff and governors. You have identified current areas for improvement precisely. Staff and pupils are responding quickly and with considerable success.

An area for improvement after the last inspection was to enhance the impact of subject leaders and senior leaders by giving them more time to monitor and evaluate teaching and achievement and to share good practice. You were also asked to increase the proportion of outstanding teaching by using more activities that fascinate pupils and develop their imagination, making full use of support from teaching assistants. Subject leaders in English and mathematics now visit every classroom once a term to advise teachers how to improve pupils' progress in these subjects. You have created an atmosphere where all staff are free to visit each other's classroom to learn about practice. All teachers work hard to provide interesting science, geography and history lessons. Teachers use whole-class reading books to stimulate pupils in the learning of key literacy skills. Teaching assistants are

very effective in helping pupils develop key reading skills.

The school continues to provide a good-quality education for pupils. Most pupils understand that more is expected of them now, including presenting their work to the best of their ability. However, a small number of pupils still need support in this area because their writing is presented poorly. Overall, writing has improved and pupils are improving their grammar, spelling and sentence construction. However, teachers do not always give pupils regular opportunities to apply this new learning in sustained pieces of writing. Teaching has improved but you must ensure that all staff learn from the outstanding practitioners in the school, so that all pupils produce the best written work that they can.

Safeguarding is effective

At the previous inspection it was stated that the governors had an adequate oversight of safeguarding. Since that time additional governors, who have significant expertise in safeguarding, have been added to the governing body. With your governors you have made sure that arrangements for the care and protection of pupils and staff are thorough and working well. The school provides a high level of care and assistance to pupils whose circumstances might make them vulnerable. Records kept by staff about concerns, referrals and support for pupils are detailed and of high quality. Links with other professionals are developed well and help keep pupils safe. Your work with individual families shows how absolutely committed you are to protecting and caring for people within the school community.

You have ensured that governors and staff are committed and engage with training in all aspects of safeguarding. Staff are up to date in their knowledge of child protection. With your guidance, staff work hard to ensure that pupils are fully aware of their responsibility to look after themselves and each other. For example, you have trained and challenged staff so that they understand the risks to pupils of exposure to radicalised views of life in modern Britain. Teachers then help the pupils learn about mutual respect, tolerance, democracy and individual liberty.

Inspection findings

- For a short period of time after the previous inspection, the past success of the school faltered. There was a period when there was no headteacher in place, with the deputy headteacher having to step up to take the school forward. The impact of such upheaval in a small school, at a time of much change for schools nationally, meant that teachers found it difficult to continue to improve. There was a slip in the quality of education and this resulted in the achievement of pupils in the 2016 key stage 2 reading, writing and mathematics national tests being below what the school had achieved in the past.
- Assessment of pupils' progress at individual, group and cohort level has been a key to success. All staff and pupils are now very clear about what needs to be done to improve key skills and knowledge that will ensure that all pupils achieve their potential. Leaders systematically check the progress of the pupils, including those entitled to pupil premium and the most able, and any underperformance is

brought to the attention of classroom teachers and pupils. For example, Year 6 pupils' performance is tracked through regular testing and specific gaps in knowledge are identified and addressed. Year 6 have improved their performance in reading, writing and mathematical skills. You have set this group a target to attain above the national average in the 2017 reading, writing and mathematics end of year tests; current performance shows that they are on target to do so at and above expected levels.

- Reading has been a priority of the school. The school has a robust system to build on the good phonic outcomes in Year 1. Pupils are very clear about the skills and knowledge that they need to improve. Teachers and teaching assistants have good subject knowledge and the organisation of learning is effective. For example, Year 2 pupils worked in pairs to retrieve information from the story 'George and the dragon'. They were able to maintain high levels of concentration and used efficient methods to answer questions about the story. Year 3 pupils showed great independence in completing a comprehension activity with questions about plot and inference. Your extensive work to develop pupils' ability to read, their enthusiasm for books and their knowledge of a range of authors are helping pupils to achieve well in their reading.
- There has been a similar improvement in writing at key stage 2. Pupils benefit from precise teaching of grammar and punctuation. For example, Year 6 pupils use colons and semi-colons accurately because their teacher explains punctuation clearly. Pupils produced some high-quality examples in preparation for applying in a more detailed piece of writing.
- There has also been an improvement in mathematics. Pupils enjoy their lessons in this subject. For example, in a Year 4 lesson, we saw pupils actively engaged in solving problems using fractions. They collaborated very effectively in their learning and showed great maturity in explaining their thinking to the rest of the class.
- You are developing teachers' leadership skills so that they can contribute to, and increasingly lead, different aspects of the school's work. As one of the subject leaders said, 'I now feel totally empowered to lead my subject.' Staff are inspired by your enthusiasm for pupils' learning and classroom practice. Staff continue to access a wide range of appropriate training opportunities. Teachers now welcome other colleagues into their classroom to share thinking about classroom practice. You have supported some teachers who had lost confidence.
- Pupils are proud of their school and are very appreciative of your efforts to improve the school. As one pupil said, 'Since Mr Brown became our headteacher we get to do really interesting things in our lessons, but we have to work really hard.' Pupils say that they are very happy in school. They understand and are committed to the school motto, 'Together we believe, progress and succeed'. You have created a culture where almost all pupils understand that they have to work hard. Pupils are enthusiastic to learn. They listen carefully to adults and concentrate in lessons. Work in most books is careful and neatly presented, showing pupils' eager attitudes and drive to do well. Pupils appreciate the additional activities you provide. After-school clubs, particularly cross-country running, are popular with the pupils. The older pupils look forward to the outward-

bound residential and the highlight for some is the visit to your partner school in Hamburg. Pupils take care of equipment and behave well in the playground, corridors and dining room. I enjoyed my lunch with the pupils, which was a very pleasant experience. The pupils enjoyed chatting with their friends and made me feel most welcome.

Next steps for the school

Leaders and those responsible for governance should ensure that:

- they improve teaching and learning so that more has outstanding impact, by using the most effective practice in the school as a model for others
- pupils have more frequent opportunities to write at length and in more detail
- a small number of pupils improve the presentation of their writing.

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

Yours sincerely

Andrew Morley
Ofsted Inspector

Information about the inspection

Throughout the inspection, you and I observed and discussed pupils' learning and talked to pupils about their work. I reviewed your evaluations of the school, your plans for improvement and information about pupils' progress. I met with four members of the governing body, including the chair, to hear about the work of the school since the previous inspection. I met with an officer from the local authority to understand how they had supported the school and their view of the progress that the school is currently making. Also, I met with your senior leadership team to discuss their involvement in improving the school. I looked at the quality of displays on classroom walls and corridors. You and I reviewed the school's records of checks made about staff suitability to work with children. We considered the school's child protection policy together. I reviewed examples of case files about pupils, as well as evidence of your work with other professionals. I spoke to some parents as they dropped their children off at school at the start of the day.