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Dear Dr James

Short inspection of Langley Primary School

Following my visit to the school on 16 March 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 March 2013.

This school continues to be good.

The leadership team has maintained the good quality of education in the school since the last inspection. Leaders have set out a clear agenda, centred on the consistent implementation of effective approaches to assessment, teaching and learning. Leaders at all levels are quietly determined in the pursuit of this consistency, providing effective advice, help and guidance along the way. As a result, staff and pupils know exactly what is expected of them and are confident they can achieve success.

Leaders are always alert to areas that require attention, using assessment data and other information intelligently to identify precisely what can be changed to achieve necessary improvement. For example, leaders used in-depth and thoughtful analysis of data on pupils' progress in writing to recognise that pupils needed to pay more attention to spelling, punctuation and grammar in their work. Sensible actions have followed and pupils' writing is becoming more accurate as a result.

Similarly, leaders have evaluated the school's performance last year and unpicked the reasons why some pupils in Year 1 did not reach the expected standard in the phonics screening check. Actions are underway to ensure that these pupils catch up by the end of Year 2 and that pupils currently in Year 1 do not fall behind.

Leaders' plans effectively focus actions on achieving the desired improvement. Leaders are clear about what success will look like. Checks on progress are frequent and diagnostic. Action plans are tweaked and revised accordingly. This leads to

swift improvement. Leaders check, and re-check, that improvements are having sustained impact on outcomes for pupils. This focus on evaluation and review is shared by leaders at all levels. It is a key factor in maintaining high standards. This is why the quality of education has continued to be good and is improving further.

Using this robust approach to school improvement, leaders have successfully tackled the areas for improvement from the previous inspection. Governors have supported the headteacher in creating a strong team, enabling him to pursue the school's aim to do the best it can for its pupils. For example, governors' well-calculated decisions over staffing have substantially increased leadership capacity at all levels and have secured improvements to the quality of teaching where this has been necessary.

Leaders are ambitious and forward-looking. An example of this lies in the well-led initiative to renew the focus on teaching personal, social, health and citizenship education. As a result, pupils' personal development is strongly promoted. This is supported by a dynamic, broad curriculum and broad range of valuable visits and enrichment activities. These equip pupils with necessary skills and experiences to help them meet the opportunities and responsibilities of adult life.

Pupils love coming to school. They behave well at all times. Pupils learn to walk around the school sensibly, work hard in lessons and develop sophisticated social skills. For example, a group of Year 5 pupils were observed engaging in a well-structured debate about the pros and cons of living in England or Italy. One pupil took the lead. She managed the group expertly, giving each pupil a fair chance to express their opinions. The others in the group listened respectfully to opposing views and put forward their own arguments succinctly and in a convincing manner.

Safeguarding is effective.

The leadership team has ensured that all safeguarding arrangements are fit for purpose and records are detailed and of high quality. A culture of safeguarding is tangible through the caring atmosphere that permeates the school. Staff and pupils show respect and genuine interest in one another's well-being. No concern is considered too small to follow up. Procedures for recording and managing issues are detailed and thorough. The designated leads for safeguarding are tenacious in pursuing help and support when pupils are seen to potentially be at risk. Parents and carers are full of praise for the support given to them and their children. The school works closely with three other schools to extend its safeguarding role into the community. The schools have established an organisation called 'Single Point' which provides information, help and support to families across the local area.

Inspection findings

- When children join the school in the Nursery or Reception classes, many struggle to communicate with adults or to manage their personal, social and hygiene needs. Very few children enter school with the skills they need for successful learning. Leaders have ensured that the early years provision helps children to

overcome their difficulties quickly. As a result, children settle in to school life and begin to catch up to where they need to be before they start Year 1.

- Last year, some pupils did not reach the standard of phonics understanding expected at the end of Year 1. Leaders carried out a root-and-branch review of the phonics programme, making substantial changes as a result. This has led to much more effective use of time in phonics sessions. Pupils are learning letter sounds more quickly and are using their growing skills to have a go at writing from an earlier age. Pupils in the Nursery and Reception classes were observed using their phonic knowledge to spell simple words during the inspection.
- By the end of Year 2, many pupils are able to read, write and complete mathematical calculations at the standard expected for their age. Leaders aim to increase the proportion who reach and exceed these standards. Among other actions, this is being tackled through the efforts to improve phonics outcomes.
- The pattern of good progress continues through key stage 2, so that, by the end of Year 6, most pupils have caught up to where they need to be in readiness for the transition to secondary school. Nevertheless, leaders have identified that the proportion of pupils who go on to achieve higher scores could be greater. This is a key focus for school development this year.
- Pupils' attendance is monitored rigorously and followed up tenaciously. Every effort is made to support parents in getting their children to school regularly and on time. For most, this has worked well. A small number of families still struggle to bring their children often enough. The school is aware that a few choose not to bring their children to school regularly, as opposed to those who genuinely find it difficult to do so. Where necessary, referrals are made to the local authority and prosecution is pursued. As a result of the widespread and effective action taken, attendance has improved over the last five years. The just-below-average figure does not reflect the substantial effort made in this respect and the success achieved.

Next steps for the school

Leaders and those responsible for governance should ensure that:

- the proportion of pupils who achieve the expected standard in the phonics screening check by the end of Year 1 continues to improve at least in line with leaders' current projections
- the proportion of pupils who attain higher than expected standards in reading, writing and mathematics at the end of key stages 1 and 2 continues to increase.

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

Yours sincerely

Sandra Hayes
Her Majesty's Inspector

Information about the inspection

During the inspection, I met with you, your deputy headteachers, other school staff, the vice-chair of governors and a representative of the local authority. I spoke informally to pupils in lessons, as well as to parents as they collected their children from school. I looked at the responses to the Parent View survey. We visited lessons together. I looked at the work in a selection of pupils' books. I considered the school's self-evaluation and its plans for development. I took into account pupils' standards of attainment and rates of progress. I read a range of documents, including those related to safeguarding and child protection.