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Mr Matt Thompson  
Headteacher  
Brentnall Primary School  
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Dear Mr Thompson

### **Short inspection of Brentnall Primary School**

Following my visit to the school on 8 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 December 2012.

There have been a considerable number of changes since the last inspection. You became headteacher in September 2014 and have restructured the staffing at the school to increase leadership capacity. This has helped you to improve the school and gives you the capacity to continue to do so in the future.

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

The leadership team has maintained the good quality of education in the school since the last inspection. You and your leadership team have created a welcoming, warm and vibrant school. Pupils enjoy coming to school and are enthusiastic about their learning. Parents and pupils appreciate the welcome they receive every morning from senior staff and class teachers. Parents feel that staff are approachable and say, 'It is great to see a friendly face as soon as you arrive at the gate.' You and your staff work hard to make sure that pupils and families are treated with respect and care. You ensure that families and children new to the school quickly feel part of the Brentnall community.

You, the governors and staff ensure that diversity is positively celebrated throughout the school. As one of your colourful displays in the school hall states, 'We may all be different fish, but in this school we swim together.' Pupils talk confidently about different faiths and cultures and are accepting of differences and say, 'Everyone here is different, but everyone fits in perfectly.' Pupils are proud of how they help new classmates to learn English and one pupil told the inspector that he wanted to be 'a teacher who helps people to learn English' when he grows up.

The community spirit among your pupils is strong and their care for each other is seen across the school.

You, senior leaders and governors have taken action to address the areas of improvement since the last inspection. You have made significant improvements to the quality of teaching and learning across the school. You provide staff with clear structures for learning to ensure that high-quality teaching is every teacher's highest priority. In doing this, you did not shy away from taking difficult decisions and you have built a dedicated team of leaders and teachers who are all prepared to 'go the extra mile' for pupils. All of your staff are proud to be a part of the school and believe that the school is led by 'an inspirational leader who passionately believes that all children can and will achieve well'. Your core values of 'Learn, Respect and Succeed' are evident throughout the life of the school.

In improving teaching and learning, you have developed robust procedures for monitoring the quality of teaching and learning over time. You have created an 'open door' ethos for classrooms, and staff work as a team to support each other through lesson observations and coaching. You have also structured learning so that pupils are very clear on the steps needed to be taken for success and they understand what to do and why. There is an ongoing dialogue between pupils about the next steps they need to take to improve their work.

In response to the previous inspection team requirement for you to improve reading at key stage 1 and help pupils to better blend letter sounds together, you have raised the profile of the teaching of phonics and reading throughout key stage 1. Leaders have implemented new strategies and constantly assess and review interventions so that they ensure that they have maximum impact. As a direct result of this coordinated approach, Year 1 pupils' phonics results have risen to reach the national average and information on current learners suggests that this positive trend will continue this year. Reading results at key stage 1 for 2016 also showed improvement.

The previous inspection team also asked governors and leaders to work with parents to improve the attendance of pupils who miss school too often. Leaders work tirelessly to build strong relationships with families and there are clear systems and structures in place if a child is not attending school. Leaders have decreased the number of pupils who are frequently absent and improvements can be seen in individual pupils' attendance. Leaders and governors are aware that, due to the high mobility of pupils into the school, securing high attendance will be an ongoing challenge. Leaders are determined to meet this challenge head on because they are unequivocal that the best place for pupils to learn is in school.

During the inspection, we discussed the next steps for the school. Your school mission for pupils to learn 'both independently and collaboratively' is more effective and evident in key stage 1 lessons. As a result, you are determined to encourage more collaborative learning, particularly at key stage 2, so that pupils develop their team-working skills and resilience to work more independently of the teacher. During the inspection, we also discussed the attainment and progress of the most

able pupils. You have rightly focused your attention in the past on pupils who needed additional support and intervention to help them to achieve the expectations appropriate for their age. You are now going to focus on ensuring stretch and challenge for your most-able pupils in all year groups. This will provide these pupils with opportunities, through and outside the curriculum, to deepen their knowledge, develop their thirst for learning and prepare them well for life at secondary school.

### **Safeguarding is effective.**

All safeguarding arrangements are fit for purpose, records are detailed and of high quality. Procedures for recruiting staff are robust and meet statutory requirements. Staff have completed all relevant and recent training and they know what to do if they have any concerns about pupils. Staff liaise effectively with external agencies. They are proactive in referring any concerns to the appropriate professionals and tenacious in following up these referrals. As a result, pupils feel very safe in school and this is supported in the views of parents and staff. Staff feel strongly that the caring and nurturing environment at Brentnall primary shows that 'all members of staff regard children's well-being as a priority'.

Pupils spoken with during the inspection say that there are rarely any incidents of bullying and that if they do occur, they are dealt with swiftly and effectively. Pupils trust the adults in school and say they would talk to them if they had any concerns or worries. Pupils know how to keep themselves safe, both personally and online, as they have been well taught. There is a strong culture of safeguarding throughout the school.

### **Inspection findings**

- You and your governors have a clear understanding of the school's strengths and what needs to be improved further. You work well with external advisors, including the local authority and a school improvement consultant, to evaluate the work of the school and prioritise your next steps.
- The early years team are improving outcomes for children. Children enter the early years with skills and knowledge below those typical for their age and stage of development in several areas of learning. This is particularly true for children's communication and language skills.
- The proportion of children achieving a good level of development in all areas of learning by the end of the early years is continuing to rise year on year, although it is still below the national average. This represents good progress from their starting points and prepares them well for key stage 1.
- Achievement in the Year 1 phonics check is improving and is in line with national averages. The teaching of phonics has a high profile in key stage 1 and leaders have made changes to the teaching and intervention strategies used to support pupils. These strategies are reviewed regularly and often to ensure that they continue to have the maximum impact. This practice of regular review was seen in all areas and is a real strength of the school.

- By the end of Year 2, pupils achieve well in reading, writing and mathematics. Pupils show a pride in their work and present their work very well. Pupils are engaged with their learning and make good progress as a result.
- Progress at the end of Year 6 is broadly average in reading and writing, despite pupils getting off to a good start in key stage 1. Progress in mathematics is much stronger.
- Leaders are aware that progress, particularly in reading, needs to be increased so that pupils attain and progress well. Immediate and effective action has already been taken in this area. Leadership of English is strong. Enthusiasm and positivity encourages staff and pupils and is helping to drive improvements in this area.
- An in-depth analysis of 2016 reading results has directed leaders to focus on vocabulary and language acquisition. All across the school, there is evidence of teachers' work to improve this aspect. Pupils use learning ladders as they read so they can write down any unfamiliar words. These words are then addressed during a vocabulary lesson.
- Partly as a result of the high proportion of pupils who speak English as an additional language, a better mastery of vocabulary and its nuances are crucial in improving pupils' understanding of texts. For example, phrases such as 'a slip of paper' can cause confusion. Staff are sensitive to the needs of pupils and support them well in an atmosphere where they are not afraid to make mistakes or say that they do not understand.
- New strategies to improve reading are being trialled with some classes. There is a focus on selecting only high-quality texts for class reading. The school library has been remodelled in 'Bertie the Bus'. Pupils can access the double-decker bus on the school playground, which has been extensively refitted as a library and quiet area. This is a real hit with pupils and staff and they all enjoy spending time reading in here.
- Behaviour across the school, in and outside lessons, continues to be good. Pupils are well mannered and polite. Their positive attitudes to learning make a good contribution to progress in the classroom. Pupils move around the school in a sensible manner; they understand the school rules and comply with the high expectations of staff.
- Leaders have put effective measures in place to support the small minority of pupils who misbehave. Fixed-term and permanent exclusions are very rare and used only as a last resort. Strategies to further improve behaviour during social times are having a beneficial effect. Pupils, staff and parents all concur that behaviour at Brentnall is good and well managed.
- Across the school, staff work together and are committed to providing the best possible education for pupils. Leaders and governors are ambitious for the school and its pupils and are forging a strong learning community at Brentnall Primary School.

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

Leaders and those responsible for governance should ensure that they:

- in line with the school's stated aims, improve collaborative learning, particularly at key stage 2, so pupils develop their teamworking skills and resilience
- develop a strategy to build in the stretch and challenge of the most able pupils so that these pupils make rapid and sustained progress and excel across a wide range of subjects.

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

Yours sincerely

Helen O'Neill  
**Her Majesty's Inspector**

### **Information about the inspection**

During the inspection, I met with you, your senior leaders and the lead teacher for English. In addition, I met with members of the governing body, including the chair of the governing body, your school improvement consultant and a representative from the local authority. I met formally with a group of pupils from across the school and talked informally with others around the school and in lessons.

You and the deputy headteachers accompanied me on visits to classes, where we observed teaching and learning, spoke with pupils and looked at the work in some pupils' books. I examined a range of documentation, including that relating to safeguarding, attendance and the school's assessment data of pupils' progress and attainment. I also scrutinised a range of policies and the school's improvement plan and self-evaluation report.

I also undertook a review of the school's website which complies with government regulations. As part of the inspection, I considered 17 responses to Ofsted's staff questionnaire, 12 responses to Ofsted's Parent View, as well as comments received via the free text facility. I also spoke with parents informally on the playground.