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Mrs Lorraine Marcer
Headteacher
Bracebridge Heath St John's Primary Academy
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Dear Mrs Marcer

Short inspection of Bracebridge Heath St John's Primary Academy

Following my visit to the school on 21 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 predecessor school was judged to be good in January 2012.

This school continues to be good.

The leadership team has maintained the good quality of education in the school since the last inspection. Since your appointment in 2014, you have provided strong and consistent leadership for the school. You have reinforced the school's values, which have given all members of the school community a sense of identity, of which they are proud. Staff, pupils and parents consistently talk of 'The St John's way', which has led to pupils being exceptionally well-behaved, polite and well-mannered. Pupils have a strong sense of belonging and know that tolerant and respectful attitudes are highly regarded. As a result, pupils respect differences and welcome newcomers to the school warmly. You and your team provide pupils with excellent support; staff are sensitive to pupils' needs. Parents are overwhelmingly supportive of your leadership. As one parent said, 'St John's is a great school... it's a great learning environment.'

You have acted upon and continue to develop the key areas for improvement cited at the last inspection. These included improving the effectiveness of subject leadership and the quality of teaching to meet the needs of all learners. You have increased the level of challenge in lessons with the introduction of 'challenge tasks', to which pupils, especially the most able, have responded well. Between 2012 and 2015 the most able pupils in key stage 2 have consistently attained results that are at or above national averages in all subjects. However, too few of these pupils reached greater depth. You recognise that challenging all pupils, including the most able, is a key priority for school improvement, especially in light of the greater

challenges posed by the new assessment framework at key stages 1 and 2. You have continued to develop teaching assistants so that they can provide effective support for pupils' different needs. You have employed qualified teachers to deliver bespoke extra tuition for the most able pupils and for those who need to catch up.

Subject leaders make a strong contribution to the quality of teaching. They monitor pupils' workbooks regularly and track pupils' progress towards age-related standards rigorously. They develop teachers' practice effectively. However, their plans do not clearly identify the actions they will take to improve the outcomes for the disadvantaged pupils. Similarly, the whole-school development plans do not prioritise the improvement of disadvantaged pupils. The termly pupils' performance information given to governors does not identify the differences between disadvantaged pupils' attainment and progress compared to others. Without clear improvement plans by subject leaders and measurements of success, senior leaders and governors will be unable to hold these leaders to account for the progress of disadvantaged pupils effectively.

Safeguarding is effective.

You, as the designated safeguarding leader, and the deputy headteacher have ensured that safeguarding policies and practice are given high priority in the school. All teaching and non-teaching staff are trained well to spot the signs of abuse and how to report concerns. Those members of staff arriving new to the school are given a comprehensive induction into the St John's safeguarding expectations. Staff are aware of the systems to report allegations against adults.

You are experienced in and knowledgeable about safeguarding matters. This has enabled you to elicit the necessary support for pupils for whom you have concerns. You keep meticulous records of your safeguarding concerns and contact with outside agencies. You work with families and support workers well to monitor the progress of pupils who have been referred to you.

The school curriculum supports the school's safeguarding policies well. Pupils of different ages are aware of the risks from using the internet and know how to keep safe. Pupils also understand the risks posed to them from using social media and smart phones. Your school's values of tolerance and respect are helping to prevent pupils being drawn into extremism. Pupils are used to debating and exercising their democratic rights through pupil voice surveys, the school council, and personal, social and health education lessons. Bullying is dealt with promptly. Although incidents of this nature are few, pupils told me that staff use different methods to try to stop bullying behaviour, including working with the perpetrators and their families. Pupils are confident that staff will attend to their worries.

Governors monitor safeguarding arrangements effectively. Parents, pupils and staff agree that the school is a safe place and that pupils are well cared for.

Inspection findings

- You have a clear vision for the school and are supported by very effective senior leaders. Teachers are in no doubt about your high expectations. Teachers' targets for improvement are clear, and you and your leadership team support teachers well to develop their practice.
- The weaknesses identified from the 2016 test results highlighted the need to focus more on writing across the school. Improved planning and more successful teaching are making a difference to the quality of pupils' work in all year groups. Pupils' spelling and punctuation accuracy are improving quickly. This is because of the range of innovative strategies used by teachers to help pupils remember spellings and punctuation rules. Children in the early years practise their mark-making and letter formation regularly; a few are beginning to write sentences.
- Mathematics teaching is improving quickly. Senior leaders have developed teachers' subject knowledge well. Teachers encourage pupils to develop their reasoning skills regularly across the school. Pupils enjoy mathematics and most are making good progress towards age-related expectations.
- At the end of key stage 2, disadvantaged pupils make progress broadly in line with other pupils nationally, although their attainment still lags behind. At the end of key stage 1, too few reached the expected standard in 2016 but current pupils are making better progress towards their targets. After a thorough review of the previous year's spending, the pupil premium funding is allocated carefully for a range of support strategies. The progress of disadvantaged pupils is a standing agenda item in all leadership meetings. You correctly identify the barriers to pupils' progress, which includes attendance to school. You have been successful with some strategies you have employed to tackle persistent absence to school, but for a small minority of pupils the external challenges have proved too great. You are resolute in your determination, however, to continue to work with education welfare officers and others to improve the attendance rates for these pupils. The school's ability to improve disadvantaged pupils' outcomes is compromised by not prioritising them in whole-school and subject action plans.
- Children in the early years make good progress from their broadly typical starting points. More children than the national average reach a good level of development at the end of Reception. Your considerable experience in this phase of the school has contributed to the improvements made so far, particularly to the outdoor learning area. Children are highly engaged in their play, sensitively supported by adults, and happy. Many exceed the early learning goals by the end of Reception.
- Year on year, a high proportion of pupils reach the expected standard in phonics at the end of Year 1 and Year 2. Pupils read confidently, using their phonics knowledge. Reading is given high priority in the school. Pupils receive regular rewards for the quantity of books they read, which are a valued incentive for them.
- The deputy headteacher has implemented a coherent system to monitor pupils' progress. He has ensured that pupils' assessment information is rigorously checked to ensure its reliability. Subject leaders make use of the network of

schools in the local area and the new links with a teaching school to moderate teachers' assessments of pupils' work.

- You have a deep understanding of the various needs of pupils. You keep a close eye on those who are particularly vulnerable and at risk. Parents rightly praise the school's work with pupils who find school challenging. The nurture groups you have set up have given confidence to pupils and helped them to enjoy school. These pupils' improved engagement with teachers, and with their learning, is testament to the success of your approach.
- Governors are highly experienced and some have experience in senior leadership in schools. They provide strong challenge to you and other leaders. They visit the school regularly to inform their strategic work. Recent reports on visits with a focus on writing and mathematics across the school demonstrate governors' insightful observations. Their questions and suggestions have supported leaders in making further improvements to the quality of teaching and learning. Governors take account of the views of pupils and parents to gauge the effectiveness of the school's work. Governors ensure that the school website provides information for parents in accordance with the government guidance.
- Pupils are polite and well mannered. They know and understand the St John's values very well. This helps them to self-regulate their behaviour and that of others. They enjoy school. The vast majority attend school regularly and arrive on time. Pupils are highly cooperative with one another in the classroom. They work and play in mixed gender groups with ease. The school helps them to understand the diverse communities that make up modern Britain. Assemblies and religious education lessons contribute to pupils' understanding of religions and cultures other than their own. You ensure that wall displays and learning materials, including children's toys, reflect the diverse nature of British society.

Next steps for the school

Leaders and those responsible for governance should ensure that:

- all leaders include a specific focus on disadvantaged pupils in action plans and identify sharp success criteria to accelerate the progress and attendance of this group, and to help governors hold leaders to account more effectively
- teachers develop further strategies to enable pupils, particularly the most able, to think and work to a higher standard so that more pupils reach greater depth in all 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 Lincolnshire. This letter will be published on the Ofsted website.

Yours sincerely

Zarina Connolly
Her Majesty's Inspector

Information about the inspection

I observed learning in all classes with you. Pupils' workbooks were examined during lessons. I spoke with pupils in key stages 1 and 2. You, governors, senior leaders and subject leaders were interviewed. I scrutinised a range of school documentation, including the school's self-evaluation, the school development plans, attendance and behaviour logs, school policies, information about pupils' attainment and progress, and safeguarding records. I took account of 50 responses to Ofsted's online survey, Parent View, 46 responses to the free-text facility, 219 responses to a pupil survey and 26 responses to a staff survey. In addition, I took account of your own surveys and parents' views at the start of the school day.