

Ofsted
Piccadilly Gate
Store Street
Manchester
M1 2WD

T 0300 123 4234
www.gov.uk/ofsted



22 March 2017

Mr Jonathan Bursnall
Headteacher
Brook Street Primary School
Edward Street
Carlisle
Cumbria
CA1 2JB

Dear Mr Bursnall

Short inspection of Brook Street Primary School

Following my visit to the school on 7 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 February 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 you joined the school as headteacher in January 2016, you have provided a clear direction for the school and share your ambitious vision effectively with staff and governors. You continually strive to identify and remove barriers to pupils' learning. Staff encourage pupils to be thoughtful and kind citizens who make a valuable contribution to their diverse community within and beyond school. High morale among staff characterises Brook Street Primary. The vast majority of parents are committed to the ethos and values of the school.

Following a dip in 2015 in the number of children achieving a good level of development by the end of Reception, there was a significant improvement in 2016. Most pupils join the early years with skills which are below those expected for their age. For many, English is not their first language and they arrive with little or no skill in speaking English. The progress made by children currently in early years remains good.

Published data is greatly affected by the number of pupils who join and leave the school other than at the usual times. From whatever their starting points, whenever they join the school, you and your staff ensure that pupils make good progress overall.

The results, however, achieved by Year 6 girls and disadvantaged pupils in the 2016 assessment tests were untypically low for the school in reading. You have taken

resolute action to improve the teaching of reading and to ensure that pupils are better prepared for the rigours of the assessment regime. The progress made by all groups of pupils currently in school is strong. You have reorganised programmes of support to meet the needs of pupils better. It is clearly evident that these intervention programmes now have a positive effect on pupils' progress.

At the school's last inspection, an area for improvement was to provide more opportunities for pupils to practise their numeracy and literacy skills across all subjects and topics. The end of key stage 1 and key stage 2 results in 2016 in mathematics showed that pupils had made at least good progress. There are clear examples of how you develop pupils' numeracy skills across the whole curriculum. Conversely, however, writing assessments in 2016 were a disappointment. You have already acted on this with rigour and determination by implementing training for staff. Additionally, you have increased pupils' stamina for sustained writing in English lessons and in their topic work across a wider range of subjects. An English specialist consultant has started to work with the school and improvements in writing are now evident across the school. There are many good examples of pupils' writing displayed around the school as well as in their books. You organise the timetable to allow specific time for improving spelling, punctuation and grammar. Pupils benefit from this.

Also at the last inspection, inspectors asked the school to increase rates of pupils' attendance and reduce the number of pupils who are regularly absent from school. This has been done. An attendance officer, working at another local school, is now contracted by you to work with pupils who are at risk of persistent absence. A counsellor has also been employed to work with families to reduce barriers to learning. I observed pupils arriving punctually and very happy to be coming to school. Pupils' attendance continues to improve.

A further action for leaders to take was to initiate support from the local authority to develop the skills of the governing body. This has proved to be effective. New appointments to the governing body have ensured a broader range of skills and experience in order to ensure a balance of support and challenge for the senior staff.

Safeguarding is effective.

The leadership team, governors and staff take safeguarding seriously and regard it as being everyone's responsibility. Thorough checks are undertaken to confirm the suitability of all staff, volunteers and governors. All of them have received appropriate, up-to-date training. There are clear processes for reporting any concerns and the school works effectively with external agencies to keep children safe. Pupils told me that they feel safe and parents share this view. The school site is secure and the governors have taken action to ensure that pupils are safe when they are online. Pupils with whom I spoke, both informally and in a meeting, told me that they feel safe and that bullying is rare. The school's published anti-bullying policy and posters around the school make it quite clear what steps should be taken to identify or address different types of bullying. A very small minority of parents

with whom I spoke at the start of the school day, however, lacked clarity regarding the new behaviour policy in relation to rewards and sanctions.

Inspection findings

- A focus of the inspection was to consider whether the teaching of reading is effective. This was following a downturn in outcomes in 2016 when girls and disadvantaged pupils made weaker progress than was typical for pupils in the school. Improvements to teaching have resulted in an increase in pupils' engagement across the school. Pupils now make better progress in their learning. Children, for example, in Reception were eager to share books with one another. Outdoors, children acted on the theatre stage as part of a performance and read confidently from a book.
- Phonics sessions are also carefully matched to pupils' skills and abilities and promote good progress. For example, those in key stage 1 who were reluctant to talk when they joined the early years demonstrated how keen they were to make up sentences by using new words that they had learned. Others showed how competently they could blend sounds to work out unfamiliar words. Older pupils talked about their favourite authors and the genres of books that they like to read. You altered the timetable for this academic year to ensure that there are guided reading sessions every day. The school's tracking system shows that pupils make strong progress in reading and teachers assess pupils' progress in reading carefully. The approach to support, through specific programmes, has been reconfigured so that pupils' needs are met more closely. New methods of improving reading skills now need to be monitored forensically to ensure that pupils make maximum progress. You acknowledge that there is more work to be done to reinforce with parents the importance of reading beyond the school environment.
- Leaders have been conspicuously successful in improving standards in pupils' writing and fostering a willingness to write. You have put into place many and varied opportunities for pupils to develop their writing skills, particularly grammar, punctuation and spellings. There are regular bespoke sessions in the week for pupils to improve their spellings. Pupils routinely learn new words and how to spell them. Pupils are skilled in using dictionaries in order to check their own work and learn the meaning of unfamiliar words. You have also introduced children to cursive writing in the early years to improve their handwriting. You agree that all of the new initiatives to improve writing need to be monitored closely to ensure that good and better progress is being made by pupils.
- Another aspect of the inspection was to explore how pupils develop their core skills across a range of subjects and topics. The recent science, technology, engineering and mathematics (STEM) week provided a raft of opportunities to develop core skills through, for example, designing and building Anderson shelters. Pupils tested how waterproof and windproof they were and if they could withstand significant weight. Pupils also calculated the amount of water that may have been found in second world war trenches. Pupils also used mathematical skills to make fruit cocktails by weighing and measuring ingredients. Then pupils wrote about the recipe, including the quantity of ingredients used. This brings

learning to life by making mathematics and English fun. It also promotes the school's motto of 'Living to Learn, Learning to Live – Together'.

- During the inspection it was clear that leaders have taken effective action to improve teaching. However, you acknowledge that there are not enough opportunities for staff to see outstanding practice in order to develop their skills further.
- Finally, during the inspection, we checked the accuracy of the assessment of children's skills when they join the school in the early years foundation stage. Records show that most children have skills that are lower than those expected for their age. For more than half of the children in school, English is an additional language. Those children who join the early years have little or no English speaking skills. Some pupils in Years 5 and 6 with whom I spoke told me that when they joined the school they only knew how to say 'yes' and 'no'. Now they are extremely articulate and have high aspirations to secure good jobs in the future. Whatever their starting points, and whenever they join the school, the vast majority of pupils make at least good progress.

Next steps for the school

Leaders and those responsible for governance should:

- evaluate more closely the impact of new interventions to improve achievement in reading and writing across the school
- ensure that teachers and teaching assistants have the opportunity to develop outstanding practice
- work together to improve communication between school and home to reinforce the importance of learning beyond the classroom.

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

Yours sincerely

Naomi Taylor
Ofsted Inspector

Information about the inspection

I observed pupils' learning jointly with the headteacher, including one-to-one and small-group intervention work. I looked through a range of pupils' work, particularly their English and topic books. I heard readers from Years 2 and 4, as well as listening to pupils read during lessons. I spoke with pupils informally around school and at breaktime. I observed pupils' behaviour around the school and during lessons. A meeting was also held with a group of pupils. Further meetings were held with staff, governors, senior and middle leaders. The Ofsted staff questionnaire was

analysed by the lead inspector. I met with a representative of the local authority. I considered a range of documentation, including the school's evaluation of its own effectiveness and information about how well current pupils achieve in the school. I reviewed safeguarding documentation and how this related to daily practice, as well as speaking with staff and children about safeguarding arrangements. I spoke to several parents and analysed the Ofsted online parent questionnaire, Parent View.