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Gill Mulhall
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Dear Gill Mulhall

Short inspection of Little Heath Primary School

Following my visit to the school on 28 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 January 2013.

This school continues to be good.

The leadership team has maintained the good quality of education in the school since the last inspection. Since the last inspection, you have been appointed as the substantive headteacher and a new deputy headteacher has also been appointed.

Your leadership has been of a high standard. You have further developed the school's strong ethos, which promotes a high standard of behaviour and forges a united school community. As a result, pupils are keen to learn, interested in their work and well mannered. You have ensured that the school is particularly welcoming and cohesive. One pupil described this atmosphere by saying, 'I feel like part of a big family here.' A large proportion of pupils join the school other than at the start of the year. These newly arrived pupils come from a range of backgrounds. You and your staff prioritise the time it takes to get to know individuals well. A number of recently admitted pupils also spoke with enthusiasm about attending Little Heath. They told me that the school makes them feel very welcome, from the day they arrive. One pupil commented: 'I have never been happier at school since I joined Little Heath.' Pupils talk about this ethos as the strength of the school. Such a supportive school environment, along with pupils' positive attitudes and good relationships, are having a favourable impact on pupils' progress.

These excellent relationships also extend to parents. Parents have a high level of confidence in the work of leaders, and all staff at the school. They comment on the 'family feel of the school', and noted that pupils from a wide range of backgrounds

learn and play well together. Parents are very pleased with the academic progress their children make, and feel that their children are well cared for.

Staff have a great deal of pride in the school. Morale is high and they rightly feel that the school has improved since the last inspection. Staff feel leaders provide good advice to help them do their jobs well. Staff also speak highly of the professional development opportunities that leaders provide.

You have a high level of ambition for all pupils attending the school. As a result, pupils continue to make good progress. Working in an effective partnership with the deputy headteacher, you leave no stone unturned in a desire to make the school a better place. You rightly do not shy away from challenging weaknesses and are quick to take action to improve performance.

Since the last inspection, you have improved the teaching of phonics (letters and the sounds they represent) and by the end of Reception pupils' phonics knowledge helps them achieve standards in literacy that are in line with the national average. This standard has been maintained as pupils transfer through to Year 2. This year you have improved the teaching of phonics in Year 1 which was, in the past, less effective.

You have also maintained the good level of teaching in the school. Teaching in the early years continues to be very strong as well as in some other year groups. In such cases, pupils are highly engaged in their tasks and produce work of a good standard. Leaders have rightly identified where teaching needs further improvement and are providing guidance to strengthen it. Aiding this, you have recently sharpened your checks on the quality of teaching to ensure that all staff are very clear about how they can improve. Pupils feel that in most lessons, the work set by teachers challenges them.

You also continue to track pupils' progress well. This has been important in helping you ensure that the many pupils who arrive from abroad, or from other schools, achieve well at Little Heath. These pupils arrive throughout the school year in relatively large numbers. Their academic starting points vary greatly and many have very limited spoken and written English skills. However, good assessment identifies what these pupils need to learn and they make good progress in a very supportive and caring environment. Such high levels of pupil mobility affect the attainment of pupils, which in key stages 1 and 2 remains below average. However, attainment is rising. In last year's statutory Year 2 assessments for example, the proportion reaching the more challenging standards of greater depth was above the national average in mathematics, and in line in writing.

Governors have maintained their effective work and share leaders' ambition for the school. The chair of the governing body provides a strong lead. He makes regular visits, along with other governors, to check on the school's performance. Governors challenge leaders about the school's performance. They value the quality of information you provide to aid their discussions. However, at times, governors, and senior leaders, need to make sharper evaluations of the school's performance and

focus more precisely on the most important areas for improvement. For example, minutes of meetings show that governors were slow to identify the weaknesses in pupils' progress in reading, which were highlighted by last year's national curriculum test results at the end of key stage 2. This was not prioritised in the school's improvement plans. In addition, they did not check to see if leaders had evaluated the success of last year's plans for the spending of the pupil premium grant or see if barriers holding disadvantaged pupils back had been clearly identified.

Safeguarding is effective.

You have ensured that safeguarding has the highest priority at the school. A strong safeguarding culture has been maintained, which results in pupils feeling safe and confident to report worries to staff. Leaders have extensive knowledge of the needs of pupils and their families, and show a high level of sensitivity and care when responding to any concerns. When necessary, they quickly share any concerns with external agencies and work with them in effective partnerships to promote pupils' well-being.

Pupils' knowledge of e-safety and how to keep safe when using modern technologies is particularly strong. All safeguarding arrangements are fit for purpose. Records are detailed and of high quality. Staff are trained in a wide range of safeguarding issues. You regularly check and revise policies and practices both when required and also when you see this to be necessary.

Inspection findings

- In writing, pupils now make better progress than at the previous inspection. Pupils from lower starting points make particularly fast progress. This improvement has happened because teachers are helping pupils to see the important techniques they need to use when writing. As a result, pupils are more able to use these techniques to help them write a range of interesting texts. Pupils are also being given a good range of opportunities to write in different subjects to practise these skills, for example through a topic on South America. These opportunities help pupils to strengthen their writing skills and enjoy writing.
- Handwriting is not always well formed. During the inspection, there were occasions when pupils were not sitting in a position to help them write well or form letters correctly. Sometimes the writing tools provided were difficult to use and prevented some pupils from writing neatly. As a result, the quality of pupils' handwriting in their work is too variable.
- Although the results of the key stage 2 2016 national curriculum assessments showed that pupils' progress in reading had slowed, pupils are now making faster progress, and reaching higher standards in their reading, especially in Year 6. This is because of the greater focus some teachers are placing on developing pupils' vocabulary, and teaching higher-order reading skills. In such cases, pupils are also reading more demanding texts. However, this improved practice, seen in some lessons and pupils' work, has not been fully embedded into the full range

of key stage 2 year groups. Leaders recognise this, and training is being provided to improve teaching of reading for all staff.

- Pupils are now making faster progress in mathematics. Assessment results showed that the rate of progress in mathematics accelerated in 2016. Work in pupils' books seen during the inspection indicates that this improvement is being maintained. This is because you and other leaders have placed a strong focus on improving pupils' arithmetic skills through frequent opportunities for practice. Effective reasoning tasks are helping to deepen pupils' understanding and they are becoming increasingly better at tackling written problems.
- Teaching in the Reception classes is particularly strong. Over the past three years, children have made very good progress from low starting points to reach average levels in terms of the proportions reaching a good level of development by the end of the early years. Observations I made during the inspection confirm that the current cohort of children are on track to reach such standards again and make a strong start to school life. The curriculum is broad and engaging; tasks are well chosen and assessments accurate. The children benefit from the strong relationships and clear routines that staff have established. Phonics are well taught and children are able to enjoy and understand the books they read.
- Disadvantaged pupils continue to achieve well. Across all key stages, including Reception where they have achieved particularly well, they generally make progress that is similar to other pupils nationally. However disadvantaged pupils' attendance was low in the school year of 2015/16. Their attendance has now risen but leaders did not identify this and adjust their plans accordingly to respond to this. Although disadvantaged pupils are supported well, the school's plans on how to use the additional funding to support their achievement have not been evaluated.
- Homework is frequently set. Despite some concerns raised by parents, pupils are receiving homework in a range of different subject areas, which plays a useful role in supporting pupils' good progress.
- The school promotes a clear set of values. However, pupils do not have a clear grasp of the full range of fundamental British values and their relevance to life in modern Britain.

Next steps for the school

Leaders and those responsible for governance should ensure that:

- teaching continues to improve by sharing more widely the strongest practice in the school
- the teaching of reading is further developed so that it is more effective in key stage 2
- teachers provide better opportunities for pupils to practise handwriting

- senior leaders and governors make sharper evaluations of the school's performance and focus more precisely on important areas for improvement
- pupils' appreciation of fundamental British values is extended further.

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

Yours sincerely

Jonathan Moore
Ofsted Inspector

Information about the inspection

I met with you, the deputy headteacher and one of the designated senior leaders for child protection. I also spoke to three governors including the vice-chair of the governing body. I met with a local authority adviser who works with the school. We visited classes together to observe some teaching and spoke to pupils during lessons. I spoke to a group of pupils from a range of different ages and a mixture of those who had attended the school since the Reception Year and those who had started during different year groups. With both you and the deputy headteacher, I looked through some pupils' books to see their progress in a range of different subjects. I spoke to some parents at the start of the school day and considered the 140 responses to Parent View.

I analysed school records about the quality of teaching, the progress pupils make and their attendance and behaviour. I also looked at the school development plan and your plans for the spending of additional funding for disadvantaged pupils. I considered records of governing body meetings. I considered 75 responses from pupils to an online questionnaire and 16 responses from the staff questionnaire. I checked staff vetting procedures and a range of other documentation relating to safeguarding.