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Mr Dave Porter  
Headteacher  
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Dear Mr Porter

### **Short inspection of Belle Vue Primary School**

Following my visit to the school on 4 April 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 October 2011.

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

The leadership team has maintained the good quality of education in the school since the last inspection. You have shown determination to ensure that opportunities for pupils to flourish as well-rounded individuals in all aspects of school life are extended and developed. As a result, pupils at Belle Vue Primary School are happy, caring and make good progress as they move through the school. By the time pupils leave the school in Year 6, standards in reading, writing and mathematics are above the national average. However, you accurately recognise that sometimes the most able pupils in school could make even better progress, and regard this as a priority for improvement.

You rightly regard the promotion of pupils' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development as being of upmost importance and this is a particular strength of the school. You encourage pupils to think deeply about the lives of other people, both in Britain and across the world. You provide pupils with excellent opportunities to discuss and reflect on current topical affairs issues. Pupils greatly value the regular assemblies that you and other staff lead and make strong links to how visionary individuals have helped to shape and improve the world. For example, pupils spoken to during the inspection were passionate about the impact that Martin Luther King had, and still has, on promoting equality, both within the United States and across other countries.

You have successfully addressed the areas for improvement identified at the

previous inspection. You have established strong links with a school in Gambia and have ensured that this partnership is mutually beneficial to both schools. Ongoing projects allow pupils to share and compare their experiences with each other and help to provide an insight into the pressures and advantages that people in both countries face and also benefit from. Pupils now have a good understanding of the beliefs and traditions of a wide range of religions and enjoy participating in celebrations of important holy and cultural days, such as Diwali and Chinese New Year.

You have ensured that leaders at all levels within the school have a good understanding of the strengths and areas for improvement. Governors are a highly effective force and are well informed about how Belle Vue Primary compares with other schools, both locally and across the country. While systems for monitoring and evaluating teaching and learning are well established, school improvement plans do not fully focus on the most important priorities for the school. You agree that a lack of sharply defined success criteria means that it is not always easy to determine the impact that the actions taken have had on improving outcomes for pupils.

Pupils say that teachers make learning exciting and relevant. You have ensured that the teaching of reading has continued to improve. Pupils develop a deep love of reading and gain great pleasure from reading. You, together with all members of staff, have ensured that there are strong systems in school that actively promote and celebrate reading. The stunning 'Once Upon A Time' library area in key stage 1, set up as a magical forest glade, is regarded by pupils as wonderful place to read and be read to.

While there is a strong and effective approach to ensuring that pupils are taught key skills in grammar, punctuation and spelling, you recognise that opportunities for pupils to apply these skills in longer pieces of writing can be provided more regularly. You also agree that some opportunities to develop pupils' spoken language are not fully exploited by all staff, including for children in the early years provision.

The very large majority of parents are supportive of the work that you and your staff do for their children. Many parents who responded to the online survey commented on the inclusive and friendly nature of the school, and the fact that you and other leaders are accessible and approachable.

### **Safeguarding is effective.**

Leaders ensure that there are strong systems in place that are understood and followed by all staff, to identify whether any pupils are vulnerable or at risk. Online safeguarding training has been introduced recently and this helps to ensure that all staff are well trained, and aware of their responsibilities and how they can protect pupils.

The systems for recording any concerns relating to safeguarding are thorough and applied diligently. All staff are vigilant in challenging anyone on the school site if

they are not sure of their identity.

The school has robust recruitment systems in place to ensure that any staff that are appointed to work in the school have been checked to make sure that they are suitably qualified and do not pose any risk to the pupils.

Leaders have made sure that pupils and staff are well informed about the risks from radicalisation and extremism. Leaders have also organised and run workshops in school for parents to provide them with a wide range of information relating to safeguarding and child protection issues.

Pupils say that they feel safe in school. They have a good understanding of how to stay safe when online and recognise the dangers that use of the internet could pose.

### **Inspection findings**

- Staff have a clear and detailed understanding of the needs of children in the early years provision. Initial and ongoing assessments are used well to ensure that teaching and provision can be matched accurately to the individual children's skills and knowledge. The school's approach to the teaching of early writing has been revised this year to ensure that children develop skills that are appropriate for their ages and abilities. Staff ensure that there are plentiful opportunities within the early years setting to encourage children to write. During the inspection, children in Reception were observed enthusiastically talking about the recently hatched chicks and then writing sentences about this. The forest school areas are used very well to stimulate children's interests and to allow them to develop across all areas of learning.
- While leaders place a high focus on encouraging pupils to develop their spoken language, not all staff pose questions in a way that fully supports language development. They ask questions that pupils can respond to in one- or two-word answers and do not then model examples of well-formed, extended sentences. This limits opportunities for a minority of pupils to extend their vocabulary and to develop strong oral skills.
- Teachers and other staff across the school form highly positive relationships with pupils and provide learning activities that engage pupils' interest. For example, during the inspection, pupils in Year 1 were keen to participate in describing the properties of two-dimensional shapes in a 'feely bag' and confidently used terms such as 'edges' and 'corners'. However, the challenge for the most able pupils is not consistently high enough across the school. Some teachers do not set activities that are sufficiently demanding and, as result, this slows progress for these pupils.
- Teachers ensure that the core skills in writing are taught well and insist upon high standards of presentation of work. Teachers check that pupils are accurate

in spelling and use appropriate punctuation and grammar. However, opportunities for pupils to apply these skills and knowledge in longer pieces of writing are not available as frequently as they could be.

- Provision for pupils who have special educational needs and/or disabilities is very well led. Teachers have a good understanding of the specific needs of these pupils and ensure that activities are planned that are appropriate to their needs. Teaching assistants provided good support, both within class and through regular intervention sessions. Good use of outside agencies, including speech and language services, autistic spectrum disorder support and behaviour support, all help these pupils to make good progress and narrow gaps in learning. There are strong partnership arrangements with parents. A specialist reading recovery teacher ensures that any pupils who are in danger of falling behind with this aspect of their learning are provided with high-quality support. This allows them to make rapid and sustained progress.
- The promotion of pupils' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development is exceptionally strong. Leaders and teachers ensure that pupils develop as empathetic and caring individuals who have a deep understanding and respect for other cultures and beliefs. Assemblies are used extremely well to encourage pupils to think about moral and social issues, such as slavery, equality and democracy. The opportunities that were provided for pupils at the time of the European referendum provided pupils with a valuable experience in how democracy operates through a whole-school vote. Pupils are provided with a very wide range of opportunities to take on responsibility, including as playground partners, reading buddies and as members of the school council. Pupils have a strong social conscience and are extremely well prepared for their lives as citizens in modern Britain.
- Leaders are ambitious to ensure that provision in school continues to improve. The partnership work that has been established with four other local schools provides opportunities for staff to share and learn from good practice. Leaders recognise the areas that still can improve further. However, the school improvement plans are not sharply focused on the most important priorities and lack clearly defined measures to evaluate the impact of actions taken.

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

Leaders and those responsible for governance should ensure that:

- teachers have sufficiently high expectations of the most able pupils and set tasks that are suitably challenging and demanding
- school improvement plans focus sharply on the most important priorities for the school and have clearly defined success criteria
- all staff provide suitable opportunities for pupils, including children in the early years provision, to extend their spoken language
- further opportunities are created to enable pupils to apply their spelling, grammar and punctuation skills in longer pieces of writing.

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

Yours sincerely

Adam Hewett  
**Her Majesty's Inspector**

### **Information about the inspection**

During the inspection, I met with you, the deputy headteacher and three middle leaders. I also met with five governors, including the chair of the governing body. I considered the 90 responses to Ofsted's online survey, Parent View, and looked at free-text comments and a letter from parents. I visited, together with you and the deputy headteacher, nine classes to observe learning. I listened to some pupils read. I met with a group of pupils and also spoke with pupils in lessons. I observed pupils' behaviour at lunchtime on the playground.

I scrutinised information about pupils' progress during the last academic year. I considered other documentation, including the school's evaluation of its own performance and the school improvement plan. I scrutinised the school's safeguarding procedures, including policies and checks on staff employed in the school, and checked the school website. I also analysed the range of views expressed by staff through Ofsted's questionnaire about the school and its leadership.