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Mr Nick Burstow
Head of School
South Brent Primary School
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Dear Mr Burstow

Short inspection of South Brent Primary School

Following my visit to the school on 19 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 May 2014.

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 other senior leaders, including school governors and executive leaders of the multi-academy trust, have a clear understanding of the strengths and weaknesses of the school.

You and the executive headteacher have worked effectively to establish a united and skilled middle leadership team. Your continuing ability to bring further improvement is clearly evident in the increasingly rapid progress made by most pupils, with a range of needs and starting points, across the school.

Pupils behave well and are keen to learn. They value the supportive relationships they enjoy with their friends and with staff and say that this boosts their confidence and helps them to learn.

At the previous inspection, you were asked to improve the quality of teaching, learning and assessment. Your diligence in addressing this issue is evident in the positive way that pupils clearly demonstrate their understanding of what is expected of them and engage well in their learning. You and senior leaders have also helped teachers to improve the way they plan the curriculum so that pupils develop their literacy and numeracy skills to equally good effect across the range of subjects.

You have worked effectively since the previous inspection to involve parents more fully in supporting their child's learning at home and at school. This has had a

positive effect in helping to raise pupils' interest in learning and especially their skills in reading.

Your determined efforts to work closely with parents to reduce absence are also beginning to improve pupils' attendance, but there is more to do to bring it in line with the national average. The large majority of parents who responded to the Parent View questionnaire would recommend this school to another parent and value the way staff respond to their concerns.

Safeguarding is effective.

You and your leadership team ensure that keeping pupils safe at school is given the highest priority. You ensure that all safeguarding arrangements and training requirements are fit for purpose and kept up to date. When questioned, staff demonstrated a good understanding of the agreed procedures for keeping pupils safe, including, for example, protecting them from cyber-abuse and radicalisation.

You and your staff are diligent in identifying and supporting those pupils considered vulnerable. Your actions and child protection records show that you are not afraid in questioning the support from outside agencies when you feel their actions fail to meet pupils' needs effectively.

Pupils told me that they feel safe because they are well supported and know what to do to stay safe. Pupils said they would have no hesitation in telling staff about any worries and that 'adults take what we have to say seriously and deal with it quickly'. A very large majority of parents who responded to Ofsted's online questionnaire, Parent View, agreed that their children are safe and well looked after at school.

Inspection findings

- We agreed that a key line of enquiry should focus on how leaders develop the curriculum in the early years and key stage 1 classes so that boys and girls achieve equally well. This was because the attainment of boys and girls has varied widely at the end of both these key stages in recent years.
- We identified that in recent years effective leadership and teaching have enabled an above-average proportion of children to achieve a good level of development in the Reception class. This academic year, the early years leader is more specifically ensuring that boys and girls make equally good progress. She has accomplished this by working more closely with pre-school providers and parents to secure an accurate picture of the children's starting points and needs. The early years leader, with guidance from specialist colleagues across the multi-academy trust, uses this information to ensure that planned learning experiences meet the children's needs well. As a result, teaching and activities capture boys' and girls' interests and engagement in learning to equally good effect. This is especially the case in successfully extending their communication and language skills and readiness for future learning in Year 1.

- We found that teachers in key stage 1 classes are quickening the progress of boys and girls to equally good effect by also stimulating pupils' interest and commitment to learning. Teachers motivate pupils and promote successful learning through interesting topics. For example, topics such as 'The Great Fire of London' and favourite texts including 'Little Daisy' enthuse boys as well as girls and encourage their full participation in learning. The current focus in classes on extending the pupils' speaking and listening skills is widening their vocabulary and helping to rapidly improve their reading and writing skills.
- Our second key line of enquiry investigated why pupils' performance in writing by the end of key stage 2 has lagged behind their progress in other subjects. We also examined what leaders were doing to help the most able pupils, including the most able disadvantaged pupils, achieve their potential.
- You and other leaders have targeted the improvement of pupils' writing much more effectively this academic year. As a result, we identified that pupils' work across the range of subjects is now neatly presented and typically shows good handwriting skills.
- Teachers in all classes set high expectations, provide well-planned and targeted additional adult support and develop pupils' resilience in learning. These actions are enhancing the pupils' ability to write more meaningfully and expressively. Pupils are responding well and improving their progress. The most able pupils, including pupils who are also disadvantaged, clearly relish increased opportunities to explain their ideas and write fluently and imaginatively. You and your colleagues recognise that this improved focus on writing needs to be sustained, especially to fully develop the ability of pupils who have the potential for high attainment.
- Pupils' attendance was our third key line of enquiry because it has remained below the national average in recent years.
- We identified that leaders and staff are committed to improving pupils' attendance. You work effectively with the education welfare officer and supportively with parents. Your records show that you take rigorous action to challenge poor attendance and that so far this academic year you have reduced persistent absence by about a third. You ensure that pupils with low attendance, especially disadvantaged pupils and those who have special educational needs and/or disabilities, benefit from extra adult support when they are at school. Even so, you are rightly concerned about holidays increasingly taken in term time and the above-average number of pupils with low attendance. You and the governors know that engaging with parents to reduce absence requires further robust action.

Next steps for the school

Leaders and those responsible for governance should ensure that:

- teachers sustain the improved development of pupils' writing skills so that those pupils with the capacity to attain at a higher standard, including the most able

disadvantaged pupils, maintain the rapid progress needed to ensure that they achieve their full potential

- leaders continue their rigorous work to reduce absence, especially persistent absence, in order to bring pupils' attendance to a level that at least matches the national average.

I am copying this letter to the chair of the Ventrus Multi-Academy Trust, the regional schools commissioner and the director of children's services for Devon. This letter will be published on the Ofsted website.

Yours sincerely

Alexander Baxter
Ofsted Inspector

Information about the inspection

During the inspection, I held meetings with you and with the other staff with leadership responsibilities. I also met with members of the governing body and the multi-academy trust. I visited classrooms with you and together we scrutinised samples of pupils' work in books. I talked with individual pupils and support staff during the morning and lunch breaks. In addition, I met several parents before and during the school day. I examined a range of documents relating to safeguarding, pupils' attendance, progress and school self-evaluation and development. I took account of 33 responses to Parent View, additional parents' written comments and 23 responses to the staff questionnaire.