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Mr D Clarke
Headteacher
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Dear Mr Clarke

Short inspection of Brook Field Primary School

Following my visit to the school on 16 May 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 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 are justifiably proud of the school's exciting learning environment. The high-quality work on display reflects clearly the school's aim to ensure that 'achievement and enjoyment walk hand in hand'. Pupils report that they love coming to this school because there is 'a perfect balance of work and fun'. The success of your inspiring approach to learning is shared among other local schools and provides them with the support they need to improve. You and your deputy headteacher share an uncompromising drive towards excellence and have successfully tackled the areas that needed further improvement. You are supported very well by your governing body, who provide rigorous challenge.

The vast majority of parents expressed their satisfaction with the school. The views of parents can be summed up by one who explained that 'pupils are learning at a good pace ... lessons seem fun but not compromising the learning side of things ... the school is managed well by the headteacher and staff. They all have a great passion for the children which makes it a great school.'

At the time of the last inspection the school was asked to ensure that pupils were challenged more in their learning and given greater opportunities to think for themselves. You and your teachers have a bespoke approach to learning where pupils are given a wealth of opportunities to apply their knowledge and skills to

solve problems. Pupils make good progress in all areas of the curriculum because they are required to think how they might resolve a question and establish the approach they will need to take to achieve an accurate answer.

It was also noted at the time of the last inspection that the skills of the newly appointed middle leaders required development so that they could participate fully in school improvement. Their success in a range of training programmes has resulted in a strong tier of middle leaders who are actively involved in leading and evaluating initiatives in their own subject areas. They have a clear understanding of the strengths and weaknesses of their areas of responsibility. Their proactive role in meetings within the local cluster of schools enables them to share good practice with other colleagues and moderate pupils work together.

Safeguarding is effective.

Pupils report that they feel safe in school and are confident that if they have a problem or concern there is always an adult or a friend they can turn to for help. They understand about how to keep safe when walking or cycling and are very clear about the dangers of smoking. Pupils understand the potential dangers when using the internet and social media sites and know how to keep safe and secure when using information technology.

The leadership team has ensured that all safeguarding arrangements are fit for purpose and records are detailed and of high quality. Rigorous recruitment and vetting procedures, and detailed checks to any visitors to the school site, ensure that pupils are not put at risk. Your well-trained staff and governors are very alert to any vulnerable pupils and demonstrate a secure knowledge of the signs of abuse, radicalism, extremism and child sexual exploitation. The school's purposeful working partnerships with specialist agencies and organisations ensure that wider family issues are supported through a strong team approach. The vast majority of parents who responded to Parent View, the online inspection questionnaire, agreed that their children feel safe in school and are well looked after. The views of most parents are summed up by one who explained that 'my children feel safe and are happy' at school.

Inspection findings

- We agreed that during my visit I would explore the reasons for the disappointing outcomes in the 2016 national tests at the end of Year 2, the actions taken to accelerate this cohort's progress in Year 3 and the attendance rates of a small minority of pupils. I also agreed that I would look at the school's innovative approach to teaching key skills across the curriculum.
- You and your leaders took swift action following last year's key stage 1 outcomes in reading and mathematics. You recognised that staffing changes slowed down the progress of pupils in this cohort. You and your leadership team also identified that, although pupils could work out unknown words, they did not always have the skills to understand exactly what they were reading.

- To rectify this, teaching staff in Reception and in key stage 1 have adopted a wider approach to the teaching and learning of reading. Through the use of different approaches to engage their class in developing their phonic skills, pupils have become more involved in their learning. Learning the sounds that letters make is no longer limited to a specific daily session. Instead, it is carefully woven through the school day. Teaching staff plan to ensure that there is quality time allocated in the school day to hear pupils read. Disadvantaged pupils are given additional time to read and discuss books with an adult. School progress information confirms the success of these new initiatives. Current Year 1 pupils are working within the expected standard for their age in phonics. Those disadvantaged pupils in the current Year 3 who did not reach the expected standards in the phonics check at the end of Year 2 now securely meet the expected standard. This is because they have also been given extra help from teaching assistants to accelerate their progress in reading.
- The new focus on reading which permeates the school has successfully inspired older pupils to engage more in reading for pleasure and use books to find out information they need for their exciting topics. Literature is promoted through visits by authors and themed weeks, and you ensure that the library is central to the pupils' learning. As a result progress in reading throughout the school is strong.
- Last academic year a small minority of vulnerable groups had poor attendance. You are very clear who these pupils are and keep a vigilant eye on them. You work closely with their parents and liaise, when necessary, with external agencies. However, current information indicates that some of these pupils remain persistently absent with no signs of improving attendance. You and your governing body are clear that a more rigorous and swift approach needs to be taken with parents and external agencies to ensure that these pupils attend school more regularly.
- It is evident that the changes you have made to the way in which you teach subjects such as science, history, geography, art, design and technology inspire the pupils to do their best work. Topics are based around challenging questions. The theme 'Victorian times' has been used successfully to develop the pupils' mathematical and design and technology skills when making their own old-fashioned style working clocks. A question based on Asia resulted in pupils creating their own Willow pattern stories and developing well their colour mixing and toning techniques in art.
- Your teachers use the outcomes of pupils' topic work carefully to assess what they have learned and evaluate the way in which they have applied their knowledge and skills. Your bespoke system to track pupils' progress is used well to check that all areas of the curriculum are being fully covered. Teachers provide very informative feedback to pupils when they complete writing tasks and this helps them know what to do next in their learning. However, this is not a consistently strong feature in other curriculum areas, notably mathematics.

Next steps for the school

Leaders and those responsible for governance should ensure that:

- they take swift action to further improve the attendance of a small minority of pupils who persistently take days off school
- the strength of teachers' feedback and support for pupils' writing is replicated consistently across all areas of the curriculum.

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

Yours sincerely

Lorna Brackstone
Her Majesty's Inspector

Information about the inspection

I met with you and your deputy headteacher and discussed improvements made since the last inspection and the school's self-evaluation. I looked at the safeguarding records and explored your recruitment and vetting procedures. I also held discussions with three governors, including the chair and vice-chair of the governing body, and five middle leaders. Together we visited the Year 2 and Year 3 classes to look at the progress they were currently making. We also visited a number of other classrooms to look at the coverage of a range of different subjects. I had a discussion with the local authority school improvement officer and spoke to six Year 6 pupils. I took account of 70 responses to Parent View, and considered the comments that had been submitted by text. I also took into consideration the questionnaire responses from 15 members of staff.