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Mr David Hussey
Headteacher
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Dear Mr Hussey

Short inspection of Briarwood School

Following my visit to the school on 15 June 2017 with Ofsted Inspector Jen Edwards, 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 March 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 an inspirational leader who is passionate about the quality of care and education that the pupils at Briarwood receive. You have extremely high expectations of yourself and staff to ensure pupils experience the very best quality of education, support and guidance the school can provide. You are not complacent and are constantly striving to improve the school. For example, you have been instrumental in developing the buildings across all three sites to ensure the facilities the school offers to pupils are of the highest quality. Further plans are due to come to fruition in the coming year as a result of your impressive leadership and determination.

You are ably supported by your senior leaders, who share your vision for the school to be the very best it can be.

You have tackled all of the areas identified as needing improvement at the last inspection with rigour. For example, the behaviour of pupils is impressive and was exemplary during this inspection. Routines are well established and staff consistently apply the school's behaviour policy. As a result, pupils have a clear understanding of what is expected of them and respond quickly to instructions.

Through continued and accurate evaluation of the school's performance, you, your leaders and governors are aware of what needs to improve. For example, there has been a significant change in governors' roles with a new chair recently being appointed. While governors are skilled and passionate about the work they do for the school, they are fully aware of the need to further embed their practice to ensure leaders are held to account robustly. In addition, while school improvement plans accurately identify the actions that need to be taken, they do not articulate how such actions are going to improve pupil progress. Leaders are also aware that the school's target-setting systems need to be refined to ensure pupils are making the very best possible progress.

The school's values, 'enjoy, engage and learn' shine through. During the inspection laughter permeated the school with pupils demonstrating their joy, fully engaged in their learning. As a result, pupils make strong progress with their learning and development.

Parents are highly supportive of the school. Typically, those who responded to the online survey or spoke with inspectors stated that their children are well looked after, are taught well, behave well and that the school is well led and managed. They speak highly of the quality of teaching and the support provided by staff. Comments such as, 'Briarwood is an excellent school, staffed and managed by an amazing group of people who go above and beyond what is required to ensure that their pupils and parents get the very best from each and every day', and 'nothing is too much trouble' are just two made by parents.

At the beginning of the inspection, we agreed on the key lines of enquiry to be considered during the day. These included: how the school ensures pupils are safe; the effectiveness of leaders in ensuring pupils continue to receive an effective standard of education, especially for disadvantaged pupils; how teaching promotes good learning; and the effectiveness of support staff in supporting pupils' learning. These key lines of enquiry are considered below under 'safeguarding' and 'inspection findings'.

Safeguarding is effective.

You, other leaders and governors ensure that all safeguarding arrangements are fit for purpose and records are detailed and of high quality. Leaders work closely with a range of external agencies and decisive action is taken when required to ensure pupils are kept safe.

The nature of your school means that all of the pupils who attend are vulnerable. You ensure that all staff receive high-quality training. Staff, irrespective of their role, are trained well in all aspects of safeguarding such as child sexual exploitation, female genital mutilation, extremism and radicalisation. This enables staff to quickly identify concerns and take rapid action with confidence.

Leaders, including governors, are rigorous in their recruitment procedures. They fully understand the importance of vetting all staff carefully prior to them starting

employment. Risk assessments are thorough and are monitored by leaders to ensure they remain fit for purpose.

Pupils are extremely well supervised at the start of each day. Handovers between parents, escorts and staff are well choreographed. Pertinent information is shared at these times, keeping pupils safe.

Staff foster tremendously positive and trusting relationships with pupils and their families. As a result, pupils are happy to come to school which is reflected in their regular attendance.

Parents are confident about the safety of their children in school. 'I couldn't be happier with Briarwood School and I recommend it to everyone' is one of the supportive statements made by parents.

Inspection findings

- 'A leading star' is how your leadership was described to inspectors during the inspection. This is exemplified by the high-quality care and education pupils receive at Briarwood. You have developed skilled and highly effective senior and middle leadership teams. Consequently, the capacity of the school remains strong.
- Leaders, including governors, are highly ambitious for the school and are determined to provide the very best for the pupils it serves. You have high expectations, which are shared by your motivated and passionate staff.
- You and your senior leaders monitor the quality of provision to ensure that teaching and learning are consistently strong. You provide effective support and guidance to staff, which you combine with carefully planned professional development. However, you do not hesitate in tackling underperformance if staff do not meet your high expectations. Consequently, the quality of teaching, learning and assessment over time is consistently good.
- All staff know each pupil extremely well and are acutely aware of their highly complex needs. Information on what each pupil can and cannot do is used effectively to provide individualised learning activities which precisely meet their needs. The curriculum covers a wide range of subjects and learning experiences for pupils. For example, older pupils were excited about their experiences based on the topic 'Around the world in eighty days', tasting Chinese food and listening to Eastern music. There is a strong focus on the core skills of reading, writing and mathematics, carefully linked to developing pupils' real-life skills. For example, younger pupils are able to demonstrate their strong progress in letter formation and being able to correctly hold their pencils and write their names. In addition, pupils are justifiably proud in being able to independently manage their intimate care.
- Teachers are ably supported by highly skilled and motivated support staff. They are well deployed to ensure that pupils receive the care and guidance they need to support their learning and development; for example, working with pupils to practise for their forthcoming performance at a local music festival.

- Pupils make good progress in their learning and development from often extremely low starting points. There is no discernible difference in achievement between disadvantaged pupils and others in the school across any area of learning. This is because teachers provide bespoke activities and the curriculum is highly personalised to meet the needs of each individual pupil. Total communication is pivotal and threaded throughout the curriculum. This allows pupils to successfully access their learning.

Next steps for the school

Leaders and those responsible for governance should ensure that:

- improvement plans indicate precisely by who, when and how leaders and governors will check that actions taken are improving the achievement and progress of pupils
- governors new to role carry out their roles and responsibilities in order to provide leaders with increased challenge
- target-setting systems are refined to ensure pupils are making the very best possible progress.

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

Yours sincerely

Jen Southall
Her Majesty's Inspector

Information about the inspection

Inspectors met with you and your senior leaders. Together, we talked about the improvements which have been made since the last inspection. We observed the start of the day when pupils first arrive in school. We carried out a 'learning walk' through classes, accompanied by senior leaders, on each of your three sites. We also held discussions with four governors, and held meetings with other members of staff. We met with the school's paediatrician and a representative from the local authority.

We looked at a wide range of documentation. This included the school's evaluation of its own performance, the school's improvement plan, and information relating to pupils' achievement and progress. Records relating to behaviour and safeguarding were also carefully checked.

We spoke to parents at the start of the day. We took into account the four responses to Ofsted's online survey, 'Parent View', and considered additional comments received via text message from parents.