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Mr R Lee  
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Dear Mr Lee

### **Short inspection of Barford Primary School**

Following my visit to the school on 5 July 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 November 2012.

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

The leadership team has maintained the good quality of education in the school since the last inspection.

Leaders and governors have invested considerable funds developing resources and provision at Barford Primary. The building and grounds are very well maintained and pupils learn in a purposeful and inspiring environment. Evidence of exciting learning adorns walls and corridors. Parents flock to appreciate pupils' learning in termly exhibitions. During the inspection, pupils from Year 4 were celebrating their Egyptian topic. Artwork, models and writing were on show to celebrate their achievements and share with families.

Leaders are rightly proud of the culture of learning they have fostered. Pupils speak highly of their experiences, and their behaviour is exceptional. During the inspection there were no instances of poor behaviour. Pupils' needs are well managed and relationships with staff are strong.

Leaders and governors embrace the rich culture and heritage of the community. They have high expectations of staff and pupils, and expect the very best. Their mission statement underpins all that they do: 'Respect, responsibility and readiness'. More than half of pupils speak English as an additional language, and leaders have devised effective policies to support them. Pupils that are new to the country receive a careful programme of induction.

Leaders responded swiftly to the decline in outcomes at key stage 1 in 2016. Despite some unavoidable changes to staffing, results are improving. Leaders have paid close attention to tracking the performance of different groups of pupils. The effective use of assessment information and high-quality training is having a positive impact on progress across the school.

Staff are proud to work at Barford. Many took the time to respond to Ofsted's online questionnaire, with all stating that pupils are safe and the school has a culture that encourages calm and orderly conduct. Staff commented, 'We feel proud to be part of a hard-working team that gives children a great start to their education.'

At the last inspection, the school was asked to further improve teaching and rates of progress by increasing opportunities for pupils to explore their own ideas and work independently, improving the teaching of phonics, and developing the outdoor environment for children in the early years. You have developed the overall quality of teaching by devising effective training and supporting teachers in the classroom. During the inspection, I observed teachers building in regular opportunities for pupils to reflect on their learning. Teachers' questioning was also effective. Pupils were asked a range of probing questions that encouraged them to think carefully about the skills they were learning.

Developing provision for outdoor learning has been a priority at a whole-school level. The outdoor environment has improved significantly, including that used by the early years. Pupils benefit from learning in a dedicated nature area, on safe surfaces and under several canopies. The improvements are impressive and striking. In the early years, children make at least typical rates of progress from their starting points. Some children make rapid progress.

Due to several changes to staffing, pupils' progress in some year groups has been variable. While the vast majority of pupils make at least expected progress, the number who make more rapid progress varies from year to year. Leaders recognise that there is more to do in addressing some inconsistencies in the quality of teaching. They also recognise that the rigour of the teaching of reading in lower key stage 2 requires further development, and that the school's most able pupils would benefit from an even higher level of challenge in some aspects of their learning.

The school's self-evaluation of its effectiveness is accurate. The overall organisation of school policies is strong and the website is a valuable and well-maintained resource for stakeholders. However, the school development plan, while detailed and clear in its vision, does not have precise enough criteria against which governors can judge the impact of leaders' actions.

### **Safeguarding is effective.**

The school's systems for recording any concerns about pupils' welfare are detailed and well managed. Leaders are quick to respond to any concerns and carefully record the actions that they take to keep children safe.

Staff have been trained in the latest statutory guidance and every pupil that I spoke

to said that they feel safe. This view was echoed by staff and governors. Governors are knowledgeable about government guidance and are proud of the inclusive nature of the school.

## **Inspection findings**

I met with you and your leadership team at the start of the inspection to review your self-evaluation document. We used this review to agree key lines of enquiry. We tested these out throughout the inspection to ascertain if the school's effectiveness remained good.

- The first key line of enquiry focused on attendance. The proportion of days pupils at Barford miss has been higher than the national average in recent years. Persistent absenteeism has also been high. You have worked with families to encourage better attendance. As a result, overall attendance has not declined any further. Taking into account several specific medical issues, rates of persistent absenteeism are much improved.
- In 2016, a lower proportion of disadvantaged pupils met the expected standard in the phonics screening check in Year 1. The outcomes for this group of pupils have now improved. You recognise that your effective work must now be maintained to ensure that you build upon the strong performance of recent years.
- Outcomes across key stage 1 revealed some weaknesses in performance in 2016. You were quick to address these issues and prioritised actions in your development plan. Specifically, you have deployed skilled leaders to support the planning and teaching approaches in Years 1 and 2. Your work has been successful. Performance information for 2017 indicates that outcomes have improved considerably in every subject. Due to further anticipated changes in staffing, you and governors recognise that maintaining greater consistency in the quality of teaching in key stage 1 should remain a priority.
- During the inspection I reviewed the quality of learning in a wide range of writing books. It is evident from the strong progress in pupils' books that the most able pupils are being challenged effectively. Pupils are successfully acquiring a variety of sophisticated writing skills and can apply these in a range of different genres. However, I did find that teachers sometimes set tasks to develop the spelling and grammar of the most able pupils which are not sufficiently challenging.
- In 2016, girls did not achieve as well as boys in reading at the end of key stage 2. I observed guided reading being taught in several classes across key stage 2 and reviewed the records held by teachers. The vast majority of teaching was supporting pupils to make progress. Pupils say that they enjoy reading. Pupils' comprehension books show that reading skills are taught with a high level of frequency. However, the teaching of reading in lower key stage 2 was not as rigorous as that found in other year groups.
- The school receives support from Birmingham local authority's commissioned service for school improvement. The district lead knows the school well and works with school leaders to help identify priorities and broker partnerships with other settings. The district lead has an accurate view of the school's

effectiveness.

- The governing body is well led and governors articulate the school's improvement journey well. They have focused on the level of challenge and support they offer to leaders. To this end, they have briefings before their formal meetings to allow members to share key information and formulate questions or issues they want to prioritise and discuss with leaders. This demonstrates their commitment to school improvement and desire to make a positive impact. They are rightly proud of the inclusive nature of the school and are committed to securing further improvements.

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

Leaders and those responsible for governance should ensure that:

- training and support for teachers in key stage 1 continues in order to achieve greater consistency in the overall quality of teaching
- the best teaching practice is shared more widely so that reading is taught with greater rigour in lower key stage 2
- the most able pupils receive a higher level of challenge, particularly in spelling and grammar lessons
- school development plans include clear and detailed criteria for success so that governors can offer an even greater level of challenge and support.

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

Yours sincerely

Jonathan Keay  
**Her Majesty's Inspector**

### **Information about the inspection**

I met with you and leaders to review the school's effectiveness and agree key lines of enquiry. We agreed a programme of inspection activity to test these out. I visited 10 lessons to ascertain the impact that teaching is having on learning. I reviewed the quality of learning in writing books from Years 1 to 6. These activities were undertaken jointly with leaders.

I met with administrative staff and the designated safeguarding lead to review the single central record. I also scrutinised other documents relating to safeguarding including: risk assessments, child protection files, referrals to the local authority and training records.

I held a meeting with three governors: a parent governor, the vice chair of

governors and the chair of the governing body. I met with the local authority's commissioned district lead for school improvement.

I spoke to parents in person at the start of the school day and on the telephone, and reviewed five free-text responses to Ofsted's online Parent View service. There were insufficient responses to Ofsted's questionnaire to generate a report. I took account of the five questionnaire responses from pupils and 24 responses to the questionnaire for staff.