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Mrs Jo Alikhan
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Dear Mrs Alikhan

Short inspection of Brooksward School

Following my visit to the school on 12 September 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 April 2013.

This school continues to be good.

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

Your incisive leadership has enabled the school to improve significantly in recent years. You are supported by talented and enthusiastic senior leaders who know what the school does well and what could be even better. Leaders' accurate evaluation of the school's effectiveness informs carefully thought out and pertinent school improvement planning. All leaders have an unswerving focus on further improving outcomes for all pupils. As a result of your strong leadership, Brooksward School is moving rapidly from strength to strength.

Pupils are enthusiastic ambassadors of the school. They talk animatedly about the different lessons that they enjoy, and their involvement in the many different clubs that are provided for them. Many spoke positively about the wider opportunities that support their learning, including a broad range of educational visits and trips. Pupils were unanimous that they enjoy learning at Brooksward School.

Parents hold the school in high regard. Many commented upon how friendly and welcoming staff and pupils are, and noted the support provided when joining the school as new families. One comment, typical of many, stated: 'Strong leadership and good teaching prevails. Building confident children is something at which Brooksward excels.' Leaders have addressed successfully the areas for improvement identified at the last

inspection. Learning is suitably challenging for pupils. Writing skills are taught effectively, as demonstrated by pupils' strong achievement. Throughout the school, teaching assistants contribute well to pupils' learning.

Teaching is good throughout the school and leaders are unremitting in their desire to provide the very best education for all pupils. However, occasionally, some explanations in lessons are not precise enough, and pupils' misconceptions are not picked up rapidly. You are aware of this, and ongoing professional development to develop the quality of teaching further remains a constant priority. You are also rightly making the development of the wider curriculum a priority to ensure that pupils have regular opportunities to experience demanding work in a range of subjects.

Current pupils, including those who are disadvantaged, are making good progress in a range of subjects. Recent assessment information, at the end of key stage 2, demonstrates that most pupils make particularly strong progress in writing. Most children achieve a good level of development in the early years, and the expected standard in phonics at the end of Year 1. The most able pupils, and the most able disadvantaged pupils, achieve well throughout the school, with many achieving the highest standards in English and mathematics.

Safeguarding is effective.

You have ensured that rigorous systems are in place to keep pupils safe. All appropriate checks are made when recruiting new staff and recorded accurately on the school's single central record. Staff receive timely training, which ensures that everyone knows what actions to take to safeguard pupils robustly.

Your safeguarding leader is tenacious in her work with other local authority child protection professionals. She supports pupils very well in school, and is not afraid to challenge external help when provision is not good enough. Pupils report that they value your safeguarding lead's support, with many commenting, 'She is always there if you have a worry or concern'.

Pupils know how to keep themselves safe. For example, they identified successfully the risks posed by sharing passwords, personal photographs, or details of their home address or school on social media. Your vital, regular e-safety learning activities ensure that pupils know that people online might not be who they say they are.

Inspection findings

- During the inspection, we focused on how leaders ensure that disadvantaged pupils are supported to achieve well. We also scrutinised leaders' work in enabling pupils to make effective progress in reading and writing. Lastly, we evaluated leaders' work in promoting learning across the wider curriculum and ensuring that pupils are prepared well for life in modern Britain.
- You track carefully the progress made by disadvantaged pupils. Teaching addresses the needs of this group of pupils well and additional support is provided whenever necessary. Extra help, such as successful reading interventions, enables this group of

pupils to achieve similarly to their peers nationally in a range of subjects.

- You ensure that the most able disadvantaged pupils are supported well to make effective progress. For example, in writing in the early years, targeted teaching enables this group of children to make rapid progress from their typically lower starting points. Teaching is adapted appropriately to ensure that disadvantaged pupils are able to catch up.
- Children's emerging writing skills are developed effectively in the early years. For instance, a group of children were busy practising diligently their pencil grip and forming their letters. Children were supported well, enabling some to be able to write their own names accurately.
- You have introduced a successful strategy to teach phonics. A group of Year 1 pupils demonstrated a good ability to blend sounds together to make words. Afterwards, they were able to put into practice their vocabulary as they read stories together.
- The teaching of grammar is typically good. In Year 6, pupils were using embedded clauses to add interesting detail to their writing. One pupil commented: 'You need to make sure your writing is full of information – and has cohesion that makes it flow,' demonstrating a firm grasp of how to develop the work further.
- You ensure that pupils are exposed to a range of high-quality texts and authors, which they discuss enthusiastically and enjoy reading together with their class. Pupils read frequently, and are developing a palpable joy in high-quality literature.
- Occasionally, some teaching does not provide pupils with clear explanations. When this occurs, pupils sometimes misunderstand the learning, and others develop misconceptions that are not picked up swiftly by the teacher. You are rightly working to ensure that all teaching addresses these areas more effectively than currently.
- You ensure that pupils' learning across a range of subjects is suitably broad and imaginative. For example, Year 2 pupils recently grew their own vegetables to make soup, building on learning in both science and design technology. However, learning is sometimes not demanding enough for pupils across the wider curriculum. This means that they cannot always reach the highest standards in a range of subjects. You are aware of this, and leaders and subject coordinators are working appropriately to develop further the school's wider curriculum.
- Pupils have a sound understanding of British values. For example, they know that discriminating against a person on the grounds of the colour of their skin, religion, ethnicity or sexuality is wrong. They also know that electing their school council representatives, and voting for 'class treats' with their peers, are examples of democracy. As such, you ensure that pupils at Brookward School are well prepared for life in modern Britain.

Next steps for the school

Leaders and those responsible for governance should ensure that:

- the wider curriculum enables pupils to achieve the highest standards in all subjects
- teachers' explanations are consistently clear and concise, and pupils' misconceptions are routinely identified and tackled swiftly.

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

Yours sincerely

Dom Cook
Her Majesty's Inspector

Information about the inspection

Together with you, I observed learning across the whole school. I spoke to pupils and examined work in their exercise books. Meetings were held with senior leaders, including you, the head of teaching and learning, and the assistant headteacher. I met with the chair and vice-chair of the governing body. I took into account 26 responses to Ofsted's online survey, Parent View. I also analysed 17 responses to Ofsted's pupil survey, and 27 responses to Ofsted's staff survey. A range of documents was reviewed, including: the school's development plan; leaders' evaluation of the school's effectiveness; the school's single central record of recruitment checks made on staff; information about pupils' achievement; records of pupils' behaviour and attendance; and minutes of governing body meetings.