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Mr Brian Anderson
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Dear Mr Anderson

Short inspection of Springhead Primary School

Following my visit to the school on 31 October 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. In fact, the school has strengthened its performance in many ways.

The breadth and quality of the curriculum at Springhead Primary shine out as major strengths. Drama and the performing arts, in particular, are key drivers for many innovative and effective projects that inspire interest in learning and lead to success at school. Your team is keen to share and learn from effective practice within the school and further afield. This evaluative and outward-looking approach has helped to support many worthwhile developments.

You have attended to the areas identified for improvement by the previous inspection. The quality of teaching has improved and standards at the end of Year 6 have risen. That said, progress across key stage 2 continues to be stronger than progress in the earlier part of the school, where there is still more work to be done to boost boys' progress, especially in reading and writing.

The local authority has faith in the school's leadership and you provide support and advice to other schools. Pupils say that they are happy at school and enjoy their lessons. Parents say that the school does a good job. Most parents who responded to the Ofsted questionnaire would recommend this school to others.

Safeguarding is effective.

The leadership team has ensured that safeguarding arrangements are fit for purpose. All the proper checks on staff and visitors are completed as they should be and staff know what to do if they have a concern about a child's safety or welfare. Whatever their role in the school, all staff are given regular updates about child safety. You check how well staff understand by using questionnaires. Follow-up training or guidance is then provided as needed.

Policy documents reflect current statutory guidance and advice about good practice. Pupil and staff records are well organised and stored securely. Similarly, the school's routines for managing medicine, first-aid treatment, fire safety, site security and cleanliness are efficient and effective.

You and your team are alert to the risks that pupils may face and teach them how to manage these in sensible ways. Pupils learn how to make responsible choices in different situations, including when using the internet. They also learn about road and cycle safety and follow a well-thought-through personal, social, health and economic education programme that teaches them about self-respect and respect for others.

Governors and staff understand their responsibilities under the 'Prevent' duty and use this to inform practice at the school. Coincidentally, at the time of this inspection, you had just used the story of the 1605 Gunpowder Plot to teach pupils about the consequences of radicalisation. In this well-chosen seasonal example you helped pupils to consider the dangers of extreme views and behaviours and made links to events and risks in the world today.

Inspection findings

- Since the previous inspection, the quality of leadership at all levels has continued to improve. You set out a clear vision for education at Springhead Primary and have an informed and contagious enthusiasm for innovation and imagination in the school curriculum. You have built a team that is able to realise this vision in practice and, consequently, pupils enjoy action-packed days at school. Lessons are interesting and purposeful and lead to good progress in many subjects.
- A significant proportion of pupils start school with a level of knowledge and skill below that typical for their age. The supportive and caring provision in the Nursery and Reception classes helps them to settle in quickly and to understand expectations of school life. Staff are calm and kind and children grow in confidence as their skills develop. They regularly get chances to learn outdoors, where their enthusiasm and energy is put to good use in the school's extensive and well-resourced grounds. From the very start, staff bring lessons to life with music, art and drama, which capture children's interests and prepare the ground for what is to follow in later years.
- When pupils move up into key stage 1, this good progress continues, although it is stronger for girls than for boys. Leaders are alert to this and are doing something about it. For example, they have changed the school's approach to

teaching phonics and this has clearly brought about change for the better. In 2017, almost all the Year 1 pupils reached the expected standard in the phonics screening check, which is the best result ever seen at the school and some way above the national figure. Furthermore, at the end of Year 2 in both 2016 and 2017, more than a quarter of pupils reached a standard above that expected for their age in reading. Nevertheless, in the early part of the school girls continue to do better than boys, especially in reading and writing. It is also clear that, at times, teaching and the use of resources in Years 1 and 2 could target pupils' learning needs with greater precision.

- In key stage 2, progress picks up considerably. Pupils of all abilities make at least good progress because of consistently effective teaching. As a result, the proportions of pupils reaching age-related expectations in reading, writing and mathematics at the end of Year 6 have risen to above national figures. Teaching in Years 3, 4, 5 and 6 presents a very strong picture, with work in each year group building securely and progressively on what has gone before. Pupils have ready access to suitable resources and teachers know their subjects. During this inspection, I saw pupils writing poems about fireworks, composing a letter to a Roman soldier, and considering how to solve problems and how and when to use informal or formal language. In all instances, teaching got the best from the different abilities in the class, because the focus and reference materials were pitched just right. Teachers were also quick to seize upon examples of pupils' work to emphasise teaching points, which supported everyone's learning and made pupils feel good about their achievements.
- You have put a lot of thought into the curriculum to make sure that it meets pupils' needs and gives them opportunities to excel. The quality of drama work, in particular, is superb. The school exemplifies excellent practice in using Shakespeare's works in education and, through your links with the Royal Shakespeare Company, you are a leading light in promoting the use of drama and theatre in schools. The results are clear to see. When I asked pupils if they found the school's approach to drama helpful they highlighted many benefits. They told me how studying scripts and poetry helps to widen their vocabulary, improve their listening, reading and writing skills, boost their confidence and takes them to new and exciting places. They also said it was good fun, especially performing the plays. This aspect of the school's work has drawn national recognition and rightly so. It is inspirational.
- Staff also inject imagination and energy into other curriculum areas. There are many colourful displays around the school that are testimony to the variety of work on offer. Extra-curricular activities also play a part. On the day of this inspection, for example, pupils were heading off to an after-school cross-country running event. Furthermore, some of the older pupils who act as sports ambassadors told me that sports and other after-school events happen frequently and pupils often work together with pupils from other schools. All these extra activities help to recognise and develop pupils' interests and talents and lift their aspirations.
- Indeed, this aim to instil ambition and a life-long love of learning is a key driver for school leaders' and governors' improvement planning. To this end, leaders make frequent checks on teaching and encourage staff to try new ideas and to

learn from practice in other classes or schools. Staff appreciate this. They give their best and do their jobs well. Classrooms are very well organised and walls are packed full of fascinating displays that celebrate pupils' work and achievements across the whole curriculum.

- Pupils' behaviour and attitudes to learning are very positive. In class, they are alert, attentive and responsive to their teachers. Outside on the playground, they readily help others and a sense of fair play is apparent. Parents who spoke with me and those who responded to Parent View had many complimentary things to say about the school. They appreciate the approachability of staff, the quality of teaching and the interesting curriculum that motivates their children. A small number of parents thought that communication between home and school could be strengthened further if the school made more use of digital communication methods. School leaders are currently looking into this.
- Year after year, pupils' attendance at school has improved. There are several reasons for this. Firstly, the school offers rewards for regular attendance and you are swift to challenge unnecessary absence. Secondly, pupils want to attend because they enjoy lessons and feel valued at school. Through regular talking groups, when groups of different-aged pupils meet with staff, they have a say in what happens at school. Pupils of all ages report that adults always have time to listen to them, respect their views and treat them fairly. In turn, pupils respect one another and all get on well.

Next steps for the school

Leaders and those responsible for governance should ensure that they:

- improve pupils' progress across key stage 1, especially for boys, by making sure that teaching and resources are pitched at the right level for pupils' different learning needs.

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

Yours sincerely

Martin Pye
Her Majesty's Inspector

Information about the inspection

During the inspection, I met with you and other senior leaders. I also met with the school's office manager, two governors, and had a telephone conversation with a local authority adviser. I carried out short observations of teaching and learning in all year groups and looked at children's work and information about their achievements at school.

I paid particular attention to several key lines of enquiry. These included: progress since the previous inspection, the quality of leadership and management, the school's curriculum, pupils' attendance and teaching and learning in different parts of the school.

By the end of the inspection, there were 18 recent responses on Parent View and nine free-text comments. There were 21 responses to Ofsted's staff questionnaire and 49 responses to the pupil questionnaire. I took account of these responses and also spoke with pupils and parents about aspects of school life.

I looked at a number of documents, including: the school's own evaluation of its performance, improvement plans, records of checks on the quality of teaching, attendance records, information provided for parents and several school policy documents. I also checked the school's website and the procedures for keeping children safe. I asked members of staff, pupils and parents about safeguarding matters.