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22 November 2017

Mr Daniel Burns  
Headteacher  
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Dear Mr Burns

### **Short inspection of Bolton Brow Primary Academy**

Following my visit to the school on 18 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 in your school since it was judged to be good in March 2013.

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

The leadership team has maintained the good quality of education in the school since the last inspection. Bolton Brow Primary Academy is a school which parents and pupils reported to be very welcoming and caring. Pupils reported that they feel safe and happy and that behaviour is good, which enables them to enjoy their learning. Teaching is good, and teachers make the most of pupils' good conduct and positive attitudes to learning, planning activities which engage pupils' interest well. Pupils and parents also agree that there is very little bullying and that any concerns they have are dealt with effectively by adults in the school. All stakeholders agree that you are very visible in school and very approachable, so that they feel confident to tell you their worries or ideas.

At the last inspection, inspectors identified one main area for improvement, which was for the school to enable all pupils in all classes to make rapid progress. This area for improvement was further developed by inspectors by asking the school to ensure that progress in writing was increased and that pupils understood how to improve their work further. In addition, inspectors identified that all groups of pupils' needs should be met closely and that time in lessons be used fully and effectively. Following the last inspection, there was initially some decline in the standards that pupils reached in reading, writing and mathematics. However, since then you and your team have worked effectively to make the necessary improvements so that progress and attainment have improved well.

Pupils write well. A high proportion reach the expected standard for their age across all classes, and a number of pupils move beyond the expected standard. This is

because teaching meets pupils' needs well and because most teachers offer pupils good, clear advice on how to improve their writing. The pupils use this feedback well. In addition, writing is a key part of all learning across different subject areas so that pupils practise their writing skills on a very regular basis. This is also the case in reading work, thus supporting strong reading outcomes. Mathematics is also well taught, and activities meet pupils' needs effectively. However, mathematical skills are not reinforced effectively enough across different subject areas.

Leaders have an accurate understanding of the school's strengths and areas for further improvement. As the headteacher, you are particularly knowledgeable about the school and its priorities for further improvement. However, some leaders' plans for improvement are not yet sharp enough and focus more on the tasks than on ensuring that the impact of actions is identified and can be measured.

Since the last inspection, attendance has continued to be a strength. Pupils clearly enjoy coming to school every day and understand why this is important. As well as ensuring that they are present to make the most of the learning opportunities, pupils attend school as they enjoy the enriched curriculum that the school offers. This includes a broad and balanced range of subjects, and a wide range of trips and visitors to school. All of these link closely with their learning and enhance their spiritual, moral, social and cultural development and their understanding of fundamental British values. For example, pupils in key stage 1 recently visited a local mosque, learning about how Muslims pray and celebrate key festivals. One boy in school reported that, as a Muslim, this was a very special time for him and he enjoyed being the teacher's 'expert', answering many questions about his faith for his classmates. However, at times, within the broader curriculum, the work that pupils do is not challenging enough, particularly for the most able pupils. The activities planned do not always meet pupils' academic needs as closely as the work does in English and mathematics lessons.

Leaders work very well to ensure that pupils understand the importance of keeping themselves fit and healthy. You have introduced two slots every week when all pupils run together. In addition, you have promoted the importance of healthy eating and hold regular tasting sessions for parents and pupils of the menu available at lunchtime. This not only entices the pupils to eat well at school but, as parents reported, it means that their children develop good eating habits, which transfer to their eating at home.

Phonics is well taught and has gone from strength to strength since the last inspection. Nearly all pupils can read from Year 1 onwards, which prepares them well for more complex reading skills. As a result, pupils are very enthusiastic about reading and are able to read a wide range of books and authors from key stage 1 onwards. It also means that they develop good comprehension skills, as seen in the strong progress they make in reading over time.

## **Safeguarding is effective.**

Leaders and governors have ensured that safeguarding arrangements are fit for purpose. Training is regular for all adults working in school and so they know how to keep children safe at all times. They know what to do if they are worried about a child's safety or if a child discloses information to them. You keep detailed records of any issues of safeguarding, and these are used to support pupils' safety and welfare and to inform external agencies, as appropriate.

Pupils and parents reported that bullying is rare and any issues are dealt with well. As a result, pupils feel safe in school and can say why this is the case. The school's records also show that bullying rarely occurs, that behaviour is good and that there are very few serious behaviour incidents.

Security checks are carried out on all adults to ensure that they are suitable to work with children. The school's records of these checks are detailed and meet statutory requirements.

## **Inspection findings**

- Pupils make good progress across the curriculum and the standards they reach are in line with the national average and improving. Teaching meets the needs of pupils well. This is largely because your teachers use the assessment tracking system well to identify any underachievement early and provide extra support where necessary. Assessment also shows where pupils are moving on rapidly, and your teachers use the information to tailor teaching and challenge pupils well. This is the case for different groups of pupils, including those who are disadvantaged or have special educational needs (SEN) and/or disabilities. It is also the case across reading, writing and mathematics and in different classes.
- Children make a good start in the early years. They are taught well in both Nursery and Reception. They are regularly assessed, and your staff use the information very well to plan activities that inspire and engage children. As a result, from their low starting points, they make good progress in Nursery and very good progress in Reception. A very high proportion reach a good level of development by the end of Reception and are well prepared for learning in Year 1.
- In key stages 1 and 2, pupils make good progress in the key subject areas of mathematics and English. Work meets pupils' needs closely and this means that pupils move on rapidly in reading, writing and mathematics. Pupils also get regular opportunities to develop their literacy skills in other subjects, such as history and geography. However, mathematics skills are not reinforced in other subjects, such as history, geography and science, and, at times, your teachers do not make sure that learning is personalised for different groups of pupils. This means that the pace of pupils' learning in the wider curriculum is sometimes slower. In addition, there are not always enough opportunities for pupils to reinforce their mathematics skills in the other subject areas.
- Your assessment systems serve the school well and allow your teachers to check pupils' learning regularly. They use the information to plan activities in English

and mathematics lessons that match the needs of all pupils. The information also helps you and your leaders to track pupils' progress and to intervene quickly where progress is not rapid enough.

- In addition, you and your leaders monitor teaching regularly and use this information to provide high-quality, meaningful training for your staff, to support strong and improving practice in the classroom. This links to the school's appraisal of staff and ensures that your teachers are given challenging targets and the right training to support them to meet their targets.
- You and the governors have a clear understanding of the school's strengths and of what your priorities for further improvement need to be. However, some leaders' plans to support improvement are not yet sharp enough and do not focus enough on the impact of their actions, but are more focused on the actions themselves.
- Attendance continues to be a strength, thanks to your constant vigilance of individual pupils' attendance. This means that the very large proportion of pupils attend every day. The proportion of pupils who are persistently absent from school is much smaller than the proportion found nationally.
- Phonics is well taught and has continued to be a strength of the school. This is largely thanks to the system that you have implemented to not only support pupils' rapid development of letters and the sounds they make but also to identify children and pupils who struggle in this area. These pupils are given bespoke support to reinforce their phonics skills, so that they also make rapid progress. As a result, a very high proportion of pupils pass the phonics screening check at the end of Year 1.

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

Leaders and those responsible for governance should ensure that:

- teaching in subjects other than English and mathematics meets the needs of different groups of pupils and, in particular, challenges the most able pupils fully
- teachers take the opportunities to reinforce mathematics skills regularly across different subjects areas, in the way that reading and writing skills are currently reinforced across the broader curriculum
- when identifying the priorities for improvement for their areas of responsibility, all leaders identify the required impact of their actions on pupils' outcomes.

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

Yours sincerely

Fiona McNally  
**Ofsted Inspector**

## **Information about the inspection**

I visited all classes in school to observe teaching and its impact on learning. I also looked at a wide range of pupils' books from all classes, across the various subject areas. I met with you, two members of the governing body and members of the senior and middle leadership teams, and a key worker from an external agency. I looked at the school's information about the safeguarding of pupils and examined behaviour, bullying and attendance records. I also looked at a range of other documents, including your self-evaluation, the school's development plan and your information from monitoring teaching. I held discussions with a group of pupils from key stages 1 and 2, which included pupil leaders in school. I met with several parents in the playground, as they brought their children to school, and a group of parents who came into school to meet me. This was useful to gauge parents' views of the school. I also considered the 54 responses to Ofsted's online questionnaire, Parent View.