

21 February 2018

Mrs Alison Paul
Headteacher
Brimble Hill Special School
Tadpole Lane
Redhouse
Swindon
Wiltshire
SN25 2NB

Dear Mrs Paul

Short inspection of Brimble Hill Special School

Following my visit to the school on 1 February 2018 with Jan Isaac, Ofsted Inspector, 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 previous inspection.

You and the governing body have made sure that leadership at all levels in the school is effective. The governors provide good help and supportive challenge to ensure that the school continues to improve. They have a precise understanding of the school's strengths and areas where it needs to develop.

Middle leaders' actions are effective at improving teaching and learning across the school. Staff working with pupils know them very well and contribute to the recording of the pupils' achievements throughout the school day. This provides class teachers with detailed and accurate records of pupils' successes and where further work is needed to reinforce pupils' learning.

The specially designed school buildings and outside areas provide interesting and eye-catching learning opportunities. Pupils benefit from a broad range of equipment and high-quality resources.

At the previous inspection, school leaders were asked to ensure that:

- signing is used consistently
- pupils are clear about what they are expected to learn in lessons
- teachers have more opportunities to observe outstanding teaching and to have a

clear view of what outstanding teaching looks like at the school.

You made sure that the school's action plan prioritised improvements in these areas. Although you recognise that increasing the use of hand-signing by staff is a 'work in progress', the actions you have taken have been successful. Consequently, staff are able to check pupils' understanding better and they adapt their teaching in response.

Safeguarding is effective.

All staff and those responsible for governance ensure that safeguarding arrangements are fit for purpose. Close working with other agencies and providers ensures that pupils are kept safe at home and in school. You and the governing body follow appropriate procedures when recruiting new staff that ensure their suitability to work with children. All staff have regular, high-quality training on safeguarding that keeps them up to date. Staff know what to do and where to go if they have any concerns. Staff are vigilant and when they have any anxieties they take appropriate action. Pupils feel safe and secure. There is no bullying and they are confident to tell an adult if something is troubling them. Pupils are safe and secure in lessons and at social times due to high levels of supervision.

Inspection findings

- The first line of enquiry considered how effectively the training and support provided for teachers have increased their expertise. This stemmed from the recommendation in the school's previous inspection report to ensure that staff had more opportunities to observe outstanding teaching and learning. Through observing each other, and visiting a range of outstanding providers, teachers have seen and learned from good practice. They now have a clear view of what outstanding teaching and learning look like. They are using this knowledge to improve their own work. For example, they are even better at helping teaching assistants develop their skills and knowledge to support pupils' learning.
- The next line of enquiry focused on how well the curriculum develops pupils' independence and prepares them for the next stages in their education. You have made sure that pupils learn throughout the school day. A prime example is at lunchtime. Staff sensitively encourage those pupils who find it difficult to interact with other children, or be in large groups, to join in more with other pupils' playing. Over time, they improve their tolerance to a level where they are able to eat their lunch with other pupils in the main hall.
- The curriculum you provide for children in early years covers all of the required elements. Learning through play extends to the older year groups, but also covers the requirements of the national curriculum. Pupils who can write have mathematics and English books. The work in their books demonstrates the good progress they make in these subjects. All staff monitor and observe pupils, regularly recording pupils' achievements in pupils' individual learning journals. These journals also show the good progress that pupils make in all the areas of learning. Parents and carers appreciate the high quality of the journals. This is because they show them what their children have achieved in school, which their

children can often not tell them themselves. However, we agreed that when pupils are undertaking their 'creative activities', teaching does not focus directly enough on developing pupils' mathematics and literacy. This is particularly so for the most able pupils in the school.

- The third line of enquiry assessed how well staff use different forms of communication, including hand-signing, so that pupils know what they are expected to learn in lessons. We found that staff use a good variety of techniques and devices to communicate with pupils, including signs and symbols. Staff ensure that pupils who have the most complex needs, are 'listened' to. They observe pupils' expressions and movements to help identify what they need and what they understand. You have made an increase in staff hand-signing a priority in your action plan. As result of training, staff are now more confident in hand-signing and you have adapted some hand-signs to suit the needs of children in the school better. Pupils now have a better understanding of what they are expected to do in lessons. We agreed that an area for further development would be more hand-signing by staff throughout the school day.
- The final line of enquiry focused on how effective the school's governing body is in changing and supporting the school's improvement. In preparation for the school becoming part of the Brunel Multi Academy Trust, many administrative tasks are now conducted centrally. This is helping you and the governing body to focus on the strategic leadership of the school. You have already established detailed plans to continue to drive improvements in the school. You are ably supported and challenged by your knowledgeable and committed governing body.

Next steps for the school

Leaders and those responsible for governance should ensure that:

- teaching through the 'creative activities' focuses more directly on pupils' mathematical and literacy development, particularly for the most able pupils in the school
- staff enhance communication further by signing with their hands habitually and clearly throughout the school day.

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

Yours sincerely

Steffi Penny
Her Majesty's Inspector

Information about the inspection

We agreed the timetable and activities for the day. We worked with you and other senior leaders during the day. We met with other leaders and members of the governing body. We spoke with a group of pupils. We examined the quality of pupils' work and observed pupils learning in lessons and when at play.

We took account of the seven responses by parents to Ofsted's online questionnaire, Parent View, and met with a group of parents. We considered the seven responses by pupils to Ofsted's electronic questionnaire, and the 23 responses submitted by staff.

We reviewed a wide range of documentary evidence, including records relating to safeguarding, the quality of teaching, the curriculum, assessment information, and the school's self-evaluation and action plans. We examined the actions the school takes to keep pupils safe.