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Dear Miss Pendleton

Short inspection of Rednal Hill Infant School

Following my visit to the school on 20 March 2018, 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 February 2014.

This school continues to be good.

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

You and other senior leaders are deeply committed to making sure that every child enjoys their learning. You are ambitious and want children to reach the highest academic standards. Your vision to develop the whole child as a lifelong learner is a shared one that drives the work of all staff across the school. You enable pupils to develop confidence and independence from the outset. For example, in the Nursery, children wash their paint pots and paint brushes before selecting a new colour to use.

There have been significant staffing changes since the last inspection. You have managed the transition from deputy headteacher to headteacher in January 2018 effectively. You are empowering leaders at all levels through your collegiate approach. The senior leadership team is a strong, united group. You, senior leaders and governors have an accurate view of the school, based on regular monitoring and thorough discussion. Your comprehensive planning to make sure that all pupils achieve well underpins an effective tracking system. You accurately evaluate previous actions taken to improve the quality of teaching, learning and assessment. Teachers who shared pupils' books with the inspector know their pupils well. They can identify the progress made and know what they are doing to support pupils to achieve even more.

Staff morale is high. This is reflected in the overwhelmingly positive responses expressed in their questionnaires. It was also evident throughout the inspection. There is a commitment to working together to share effective practice and to learn from each other. Staff appreciate the regular opportunities for training to develop their teaching skills. You are outward-looking and have well-developed links with a local teaching school alliance. You value the external perspective provided by the local authority. You regularly collaborate with other schools to evaluate the effectiveness of your work. This ensures that you are providing the best possible education for the pupils.

Outcomes for pupils have risen across the school since the last inspection. The proportion of children who leave the early years with a good level of development has risen from 36% to 60%. Outcomes at the end of key stage 1 are now above national standards. The vast majority of pupils reach age-related expectations in reading, writing and mathematics. You are now working to help more pupils reach greater depth.

Pupils are enthusiastic about their learning, especially their writing. They are confident to talk about the work in their books. They enjoy the range of opportunities they have to explore and find out for themselves. They take ownership of their learning. Adults are skilled in helping pupils make connections in their learning. They use questions effectively to encourage pupils to think more deeply. Pupils behave well because they are interested in what they are doing. They support and cooperate with each other in lessons. On the playground, they engage in imaginative games they have thought up themselves. They told the inspector that the school is a happy place to be: 'We have lots of friends and adults who help us.'

Phonics teaching was identified as an area for improvement at the last inspection. Staff have received training in phonics. They have designed their own resources to support pupils in learning the different sounds. As a result, the proportion of pupils reaching the expected standard in phonics at the end of Year 1 has risen from 48% to 71%. This is still below national averages. However, by the end of Year 2, outcomes are in line with national standards. The phonics teaching observed did not match pupils' needs sufficiently well. Some pupils were confused because adults did not model clearly or correct errors quickly enough. There is still work to do to improve the teaching of phonics across the school.

Governors have a well-developed understanding of the school and know the direction in which it is heading. They are ambitious for the children. The governing body is going through a period of transition. Many new governors have joined in the last year, bringing with them a wealth of experience and skills. They have a comprehensive understanding of their roles and responsibilities. They carry out regular monitoring visits. They have very positive working relationships with school leaders and are able to hold them to account effectively.

Parents and carers are supportive of the school. One hundred and thirty two responded to Parent View, of which 100% would recommend the school to others. The 11 free-text messages received during the inspection were very positive.

Comments such as 'This is a fantastic school where the quality of teaching and the care that the staff [have] is exceptional', and 'The school has a child-centred and nurturing approach, which has enabled our child's confidence to grow and grow...' were typical. The vast majority of parents who spoke to the inspector were also very positive. They stated that their child is happy and safe at school.

Safeguarding is effective.

The leadership team has ensured that all safeguarding arrangements are fit for purpose and that records are detailed and well maintained.

The designated safeguarding leads are highly effective. They work as a team to give vulnerable children and their families the help and support that they need. They have a deep understanding of the issues facing many of their families. They show care and concern for them. They are tenacious in following up any concern, especially when external agencies are involved.

Pupils said that they like the school because 'it is a safe place to be, the doors are locked, visitors have badges and our teachers keep us safe'. They have a good understanding of stranger danger and road safety and know that they should tell an adult if they see something they do not like on a computer or tablet.

Leaders complete appropriate checks on staff's suitability to work with children. Staff keep detailed records and maintain them to a high standard. Governors have a clear understanding of their statutory responsibilities to keep children safe. The safeguarding governor visits regularly to check that staff follow policies and procedures diligently. All staff and governors are up to date in their safeguarding training.

Inspection findings

- A key line of enquiry to investigate during this inspection was the quality of teaching and learning in the early years. A particular focus was the engagement of boys in their learning. This was because the proportion of boys reaching a good level of development by the end of the early years has been lower than that of girls for the last four years. In 2014, the gap between them was 20%.
- The early years has been transformed. A purpose-built area provides a high-quality and well-resourced learning environment. Leaders have developed a curriculum which enables all children to flourish. There is a focus on critical thinking. Staff make sure that children can investigate and apply their learning across a range of subjects. During the inspection, boys and girls were absorbed in their learning. They make exciting discoveries and demonstrate resilience and perseverance in refining their work. Boys shared their learning about materials for boat building. They knew that cardboard would not be suitable as 'it would get wet, go soggy and then the water would come in.' Children take turns, cooperate well and listen to each other's ideas and suggestions.
- Adults are highly skilled in developing children's skills and understanding. They give children space and time to think for themselves before checking and

developing their understanding. Children learn to take risks in a safe environment. They understand and follow the clear rules and routines. For example, in the outside area, children built an obstacle course by piling up tyres and using various planks to link them together. A boy tested it out. He knew that it could only be so high before it would be dangerous. Staff give a high priority to improving children's reading, writing and mathematics skills and understanding. Children love to write. They know that their writing is valued. This is because adults make sure children write with a real purpose and audience in mind. Boys label and describe their models in detail. They identify the start and finish of their obstacle course by writing signs for others to read. Children use information books effectively. In the Nursery, children found pictures of tadpoles while using a magnifying glass to look at the real tadpoles. The early years is a strength of the school. Children get an exciting start to their education. The gap between boys and girls is narrowing, and the proportion of children achieving a good level of development continues to rise.

- The second area of focus was to look at how effectively leaders ensure that disadvantaged pupils make at least good progress. Outcomes for this group of pupils are strong, and the vast majority reach age-related standards by the end of Year 2. However, fewer reach greater depth and many have been persistently absent from school. Leaders are determined that they use funding to improve attainment. All staff work closely to ensure that the core provision is of the highest quality. Staff are ambitious for their pupils and want more disadvantaged pupils to reach the higher standards in writing and mathematics. Staff support pupils in lessons to prevent them from falling behind. Staff track pupils' progress rigorously. Regular discussions identify those who need additional support. Staff then provide same-day catch-up help. For example, staff identify pupils who struggle with a mathematical concept in the morning and then support them in a small group in the afternoon to develop their understanding.
- Staff track pupils' attendance carefully and hold daily attendance meetings to discuss any absent child. Staff make phone calls and home visits to make sure that children are safe. Leaders work successfully with families to ensure that children are in school more regularly. Leaders are determined to improve the life chances of these pupils. A pupil premium advocate uses a wide range of interesting experiences to engage disadvantaged pupils in their learning. Pupils talked enthusiastically about trips to places such as Warwick Castle and the local cinema. They enjoy participating in Lego workshops, learning through a car fest held at school and their weekly forest school sessions. As a result, pupils are coming to school more regularly. The number of persistently absent pupils is falling.
- Another area of focus related to pupils who have special educational needs (SEN) and/or disabilities. The proportion of pupils who have SEN and/or disabilities is higher than that found in most primary schools. Leadership of this area is strong. There is a comprehensive understanding of the range of children's needs, some of which are complex. A range of support relevant to need is available. For example, some children follow a programme to support the development of their fine and gross motor skills. A qualified teacher leads many intervention sessions. This support is highly effective. Good subject knowledge, combined with well-

planned sessions, helps pupils to be successful. This investment is ensuring that pupils who have SEN and/or disabilities make good progress, albeit in very small steps. Staff support the majority of these pupils appropriately. Adults know when to step back and enable the child to work independently. They give good encouragement. However, at other times, work planned is not well matched to pupils' needs. On these occasions, pupils' progress is limited.

- A final area explored during the inspection was the way in which the curriculum enables pupils to develop a wide range of skills, knowledge and understanding. Leaders ensure that the curriculum is memorable. First-hand experiences, visits and visitors add to the richness of the curriculum. No limit is placed on learning. Continuous provision is being developed right across the school. This enables pupils to revisit aspects of learning, such as telling the time and shape. Through these opportunities, pupils refine their skills and deepen their understanding. Staff use enquiry-based challenges and a variety of learning stimuli to hook pupils into wanting to find out more. For example, pupils were designing and measuring a hutch for a rabbit they saw during a farm visit. Pupils are encouraged to follow their interests and take ownership of their learning. This results in pupils who are highly engaged in every lesson. Writing across the curriculum is an important expectation. Pupils develop the skills to give a reasoned opinion, explain, create and recount an event from an early age. In key stage 1, pupils know that their writing has purpose and is read by others. Some pupils struggle with letter formation, handwriting and presentation. This can limit the quality of the finished product.

Next steps for the school

Leaders and those responsible for governance should ensure that:

- the teaching of phonics is further refined so that a higher proportion of pupils reach the expected standard by the end of Year 1
- all staff have the highest expectations of what children of all ages can do so that more pupils, including those who are disadvantaged, achieve greater depth
- pupils develop the handwriting and presentation skills they need to finish their work to a high standard.

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

Nicola Harwood
Her Majesty's Inspector

Information about the inspection

- I held discussions with you and other leaders about the school's current strengths and plans for improvement. We discussed the school's self-evaluation and the key lines of enquiry for this inspection. We talked about significant changes that have been made at the school since the last inspection.
- I met with a group of eight governors, including the chair and vice-chair. I also met with teachers to discuss the work in pupils' books. I considered the 35 responses to the staff questionnaire.
- I carried out learning walks and visits to classrooms with you and an assistant headteacher to look at the impact on pupils' learning and progress of teaching and assessment. During these visits, I spoke with pupils, looked at their books and discussed their work with them. I looked at a range of pupils' books including writing, mathematics and science.
- I talked to a group of pupils to seek their views. I watched and talked to some pupils on the playground during their breaktime.
- I met with parents before school started and considered the 132 responses to Ofsted's online questionnaire, Parent View. I also considered the 11 free-text responses.
- I looked at a range of documents including: action plans; school summaries for phonics and greater depth assessments; external review visit reports; and procedures for safeguarding and for checking the suitability of staff to work with pupils.
- I checked the school website, which meets statutory requirements.