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Mrs Jane Young  
Headteacher  
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Dear Mrs Young

### **Short inspection of Barton Hill Academy**

Following my visit to the school on 28 March 2018 with Deborah Tregellas, 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 April 2014.

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

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

Under your leadership, the school continues to improve. Your commitment to improving the life chances of all pupils, including the disadvantaged and the vulnerable, is at the very heart of the school. Your leadership team and staff are united in striving to do their very best for the pupils in your care. As a result of your team's efforts, standards are good and they are rising further. Pupils are now making more progress in reading and writing than they do in the three quarters of schools in the country.

Your leadership team and teachers are relentless in their quest to continually improve teaching, learning and assessment. You set high expectations of teachers and you provide them with the support necessary to reach these. Teachers are responding enthusiastically and they continue to search for new ideas to try to improve their classroom practice further.

The school serves a community that has a substantial degree of deprivation. You and your staff recognise that a number of pupils must overcome significant barriers if they are to be able to learn and to aspire to high standards. Your team has fully embraced that challenge. Pupils are well supported from the time they enter the Nursery or Reception through to being prepared for secondary school. As a result of your staff's work, pupils come to school keen to take part and to learn. They are given opportunities to take part in a variety of activities to build their confidence

and raise their expectations of themselves. Your team works hard to reduce pupils' absence to a minimum. They have been successful in raising attendance to the national average. However, there are some disadvantaged pupils who are still absent too often. This is an area you continue to work on.

### **Safeguarding is effective.**

You and your leadership team have ensured that arrangements for keeping pupils safe are fit for purpose. You have established a culture of vigilance across the school. All staff are well trained and know what to do if they have a concern. Pupils say they feel safe and parents agree.

You have reacted to weaknesses in the local authority children's services by increasing the capacity of the pastoral care staff within the school. The designated safeguarding lead is well trained and leads a team that is able to respond to a range of issues. There are good links with other agencies. As a result, vulnerable pupils are kept safe and supported so that they can thrive in school.

All the necessary checks and records regarding staff and volunteers are in place. Appropriate risk assessments are carried out for activities and trips.

### **Inspection findings**

- This short inspection's first line of enquiry concerned the progress made by pupils in mathematics. Over the past three years, pupils have achieved broadly similar levels of success in mathematics as in other schools. This is in marked contrast to reading and writing, where they make significantly more progress. Leaders acted to raise standards in mathematics in 2016 by reviewing the curriculum and revising how mathematics is taught from Year 1 onwards. The change in approach requires a substantial ongoing training programme for teachers. This investment is now beginning to pay off. Standards are rising and pupils are beginning to show a greater understanding of mathematical concepts.
- The new mathematics curriculum contains opportunities for pupils to develop their reasoning and problem-solving skills. However, pupils are not always challenged to deepen their thinking as much as they should. This is an area teachers continue to work on.
- The second line of enquiry concerned the progress of the most able pupils. In the past, these pupils have made less progress than other pupils in the school. Leaders and teachers recognise this and improving the progress that this group makes is a key priority for them. There has been a significant investment in staff training and leaders are monitoring progress closely. As a result of this focus, the most able are now making better progress and reaching the highest standards more regularly. In English, for example, pupils are writing fluently to a high standard. They have a good grasp of grammar and use vocabulary well to add impact to their work. They reach the same standards of writing in other subjects, such as science and history.
- Leaders have invested in putting two teachers into each class where possible.

This is enabling an increased focus on meeting the needs of the most able and is having considerable impact.

- Leaders recognise that, while they are making progress, there is more to do to ensure the most able pupils are reaching the highest standards consistently. They know that most teaching is meeting pupils' needs but that this is not yet consistent enough to ensure that pupils maximise their progress. Consequently, leaders continue to provide a programme of support for staff, and teachers continue to research new ideas and further refine their practice.
- The third line of enquiry concerned the start that children receive in the early years. Leaders and teachers have a good understanding of children's starting points when they join. They work hard to make links with local nurseries so that transition into the foundation stage is as smooth as possible.
- Many children join the school with levels of development below, or well below, the national average. A significant proportion of children are disadvantaged and leaders are aware of the barriers that they face and put appropriate support in place for them. By the time they are ready to join Year 1 many children have caught up and have achieved the good level of development they need to give them a flying start in key stage 1.
- Parents value the rich, nurturing environment which the early years classes provide. Children are stimulated by a wide range of activities inside and outside the classroom. As a result of the high quality of teaching, children make good progress academically, socially and emotionally.
- The final line of enquiry focused on the support that the school provides to disadvantaged pupils and to pupils who have special educational needs (SEN) and/or disabilities. The school's support for disadvantaged pupils is good. Disadvantaged pupils enter the school well behind other pupils but as a result of the attention they receive, they are catching up. School leaders have made good use of research findings, and the results of an external review to target their pupil premium spending wisely. Pupils are provided with pastoral support, which includes reaching out to families. Their progress is closely monitored and teachers provide additional support where necessary.
- Pupils who have SEN and/or have disabilities are well supported and make good progress across all year groups. The special educational needs coordinator is well trained and experienced. She ensures that pupils' needs are assessed accurately and appropriate support is provided so that pupils can access the curriculum wherever possible. Teachers and teaching assistants have a good understanding of the needs of each pupil and use an effective range of strategies to support pupils.

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

Leaders and those responsible for governance should ensure that:

- the school's focus on ensuring the most able pupils are challenged sufficiently so that they can reach the highest standards remains a priority for all teachers
- recent improvements in the teaching of mathematics are embedded and further

refined so that pupils make more than average progress in mathematics, when compared to other schools nationally.

I am copying this letter to the chair of the governing body, chair of the board of trustees and the chief executive officer of the multi-academy trust, the regional schools commissioner and the director of children's services for Torbay. This letter will be published on the Ofsted website.

Yours sincerely

Andrew Lovett  
**Her Majesty's Inspector**

### **Information about the inspection**

Inspectors met with you and your senior staff at the start of the day to establish the key lines of enquiry to be pursued during the inspection. The inspection team visited lessons, often in the company of a senior leader, and examined pupils' work. During the day, inspectors held meetings with you, other senior staff, groups of pupils and governors. An inspector spoke with a senior officer of the multi-academy trust. Inspectors also examined a range of information provided by the school. Inspectors took into account 28 responses to Parent View, 36 responses to the staff survey and 50 to the pupil survey.