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Mrs Aileen Davies  
Headteacher  
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Dear Mrs Davies

### **Short inspection of Brookmans Park Primary School**

Following my visit to the school on 27 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 October 2013.

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

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

Since your appointment as headteacher in September 2015, you have continually sought ways to bring about improvements to the school. The actions you have taken to develop the school further have had a positive impact on pupils' learning and personal development. Leaders' decisions have been based on clear evaluations of the school's strengths and weaknesses. The vast majority of parents and carers are extremely happy with the school. They recognise that their children receive an excellent start in the Nursery and Reception classes and that the school has improved since the previous inspection.

The parents I spoke to informally at the start of the day were delighted with the school. Typical comments included, 'The staff have a good understanding of my child's needs' and 'School leaders are very forward-looking and they are continually trying to improve the school.' These views were endorsed by the overwhelming majority of parents who responded to Ofsted's online questionnaire, Parent View, and by the majority of parents who texted about their views of the school. Nevertheless, a small number of parents believe that there is scope for communication to be improved and for new initiatives to be explained more clearly.

Pupils behave well in lessons and around school. Leaders have promoted pupils' use of 'mindfulness' skills in the last three years, encouraging clear thinking and

developing pupils' emotional well-being. Pupils are polite to each other and respectful to adults.

Over the last two years, your strong focus on improving subject leadership, which was identified as an area for development in the previous inspection, has resulted in leaders being given more time to monitor their subjects. Subject leaders now work with greater precision when assessing pupils' attainment across the curriculum. However, there is more work to be done to develop a system to check that pupils make enough progress in subjects other than English and mathematics.

Your emphasis on improving pupils' progress in reading has been extremely successful. Your decision, supported by governors, to invest in better-quality reading materials and to change the way reading is taught has raised teachers' expectations about what pupils can achieve. Reading is a strength of the school, and pupils consistently make good or better progress. Leaders and governors are rightly conscious of the need to ensure that progress in mathematics and writing is equally good.

Governors ensure that they understand the needs of the school well. They ask appropriately challenging questions of senior leaders, and they remain fully committed to your drive to improve progress in writing and mathematics.

### **Safeguarding is effective.**

You ensure that the school's safeguarding arrangements are well organised, securely maintained and fit for purpose. Records of staff's and volunteers' suitability to work with children are clear and comprehensive. Staff understand their role in keeping pupils safe at school. Staff are confident in their understanding of how to report any concerns, and the designated safeguarding leaders liaise appropriately with other agencies, ensuring that concerns are followed up in a timely manner. Leaders know how to seek advice from specialist support staff, should the need arise.

The pupils I spoke to informally around the school told me that they feel safe and happy at school. Parents' views were also positive. The overwhelming majority agreed that pupils are safe and well cared for at school, with many choosing to express how happy their children feel.

### **Inspection findings**

- In order to ascertain whether the school remained good, we agreed a number of lines of enquiry. The first line of enquiry was about the steps leaders are taking to improve pupils' progress in mathematics and writing in key stage 2. In the 2017 key stage 2 tests, for example, pupils' performance indicated that they had made broadly similar progress in these subjects to pupils nationally. In reading, by contrast, pupils' progress was much better.
- You investigated the reasons for the differences in order to inform your strategies for raising achievement. Hence, in September 2017, you introduced new

approaches to the teaching of writing. Over the course of the last two terms, teachers have been implementing changes such as 'writing toolkits', which encourage pupils to take more responsibility for the quality and content of their own writing. Recently, as part of a monitoring visit from 'Herts for Learning', you decided to give even more focus to the way teachers identify and correct pupils' spelling errors.

- In response to the dip in progress in mathematics in the 2017 national tests at the end of key stage 2, you introduced a number of changes to lesson planning. Mathematics lessons now include a defined sequence of learning activities. These include an initial assessment task, more frequent use of practical equipment to help pupils visualise abstract problems, and plenty of opportunities for pupils to explain how they have solved, or intend to solve, a problem. You explained to me how your recent monitoring of teaching and learning helped you to identify the need for more consistent challenge across mathematics lessons. You further identified the need for assessment activities at the start of mathematics lessons to be more consistently effective.
- When we visited lessons, the positive impact of your actions was evident. In the lessons we visited, we saw pupils making good use of practical equipment to deepen their understanding. For example, in two Year 6 lessons, we saw pupils using equipment to help them visualise and solve number sequence problems involving algebra.
- From lesson observations, it was clear that the school's new, agreed lesson structure is being consistently implemented across key stage 2, and most pupils are making better progress as a result. Nevertheless, it was also evident to us both that some pupils, usually the most able, are not making as much progress as they might in lessons. This is because some of the work is too easy, and the level of challenge is not consistently demanding.
- The school's own assessment information suggests that pupils currently in key stage 2 are making good progress in mathematics and writing. Work in pupils' books shows that the new approaches are being implemented effectively in the main. Leaders are clear that the work to improve progress in mathematics needs to continue, and this remains an important aspect of the school's current plans for improvement.
- Our final line of enquiry was about the quality of work pupils undertake in subjects other than English and mathematics. It was important to check whether pupils are receiving the same good quality of teaching as they do in English and mathematics and to find out how much progress they are making.
- From discussions with a group of subject leaders, it was clear that they use their own subject expertise effectively to support and train their colleagues. They are involved in making judgements about the quality of teaching in their subjects, and their action plans are appropriately informed by the findings of their monitoring. The curriculum is carefully planned, and the use of 'sizzling starters' and 'fabulous finishes' has included an Egyptian day and a visit to The British Museum. These activities engage pupils' interest and promote their enjoyment of learning.

- In art and in physical education (PE), the significant contributions made by staff with particular subject expertise enhance outcomes for pupils. Both of these subjects are strengths of the school. The school's gallery, for example, displays vibrant examples of pupils' art work. Evidence in pupils' topic books shows that they are producing a good breadth of work across the curriculum. Science, for example, includes a good range of opportunities for pupils to carry out and evaluate their own investigations.
- Subject leaders have played an active role in devising systems to assess pupils' attainment, and they are now at the early stages of developing ways to measure pupils' progress. When we looked at topic books together, we identified opportunities for leaders to be more aware of the progress pupils are making, especially in the humanities, where the amount of work produced varied between different subjects.

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

Leaders and those responsible for governance should ensure that:

- teachers consistently extend all pupils in mathematics, especially the most able
- they develop a system to track pupils' progress in subjects other than English and mathematics and ensure particularly that pupils complete enough work in humanities subjects.

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

Yours sincerely

Nicholas Rudman  
**Ofsted Inspector**

### **Information about the inspection**

As part of the inspection, I met with you and your deputy to discuss the school's priorities for development and the impact of actions taken since the previous inspection. I also met the leaders who have responsibility for art, PE, religious education and the humanities. In addition, I met with two governors, including one of the co-chairs, and spoke on the telephone to the 'Herts for Learning' improvement partner. I scrutinised a variety of sources of information, including the school's self-evaluation, governing body minutes of meetings, plans and records for the use of additional funding, and the school's assessment information.

I checked the school's safeguarding and child protection procedures, the records of checks leaders make on the suitability of staff to work with children, and information relating to attendance. We undertook joint observations of learning

across the school, looked at work in pupils' books and spoke with pupils about their learning during lessons. I took account of the Ofsted online questionnaire responses from 91 parents, as well as 35 written responses from parents. I also analysed 13 responses from staff giving their views of the school.