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Mrs Debbie Wilson  
Headteacher  
Brickhill Primary School  
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Bedford  
Bedfordshire  
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Dear Mrs Wilson

### **Short inspection of Brickhill Primary School**

Following my visit to the school on 25 April 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 November 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, your assistant headteachers and the knowledgeable governing body have a clear vision for what you are trying to achieve for both pupils and the local community. Together, you are managing effectively the change to a primary school.

You have established a strong culture of school improvement. Your monitoring of provision is robust and accurate. It is successfully identifying what the school is doing well and what still needs improving. Weaknesses found in the last inspection have been tackled well. For example, pupils in key stage 2 are now making rapid progress in mathematics. Development planning is focusing on the right next steps, including improving further the levels of challenge for the most able and ensuring that progress in writing is equally strong in all classes.

You and other senior leaders have high expectations of pupils. Together, you have built a strong team of teachers and support staff. They work together well to ensure that the school's high aspirations are reflected in everyday practice in the classroom. Staff willingly embrace change. For example, they have worked hard to implement a new curriculum in the last year. This is already having a positive effect on outcomes for pupils and, by linking subjects together, is helping to make work more purposeful. Pupils are very clear that, as one commented, 'Learning is more fun.'

Pupils' behaviour is exemplary. They are polite, friendly and articulate. When I met with a group of pupils, they were able to talk eloquently to me about why they enjoy school so much. Pupils are keen to do well. They take pride in their work. The school's strong focus on supporting pupils' social development is reflected well in the high levels of cooperation seen at playtime. Pupils take responsibility enthusiastically by, for example, organising lunchtime activities such as a Magazine Club or by being sports or house leaders. Activities such as a recent whole-school topic on the Commonwealth help pupils to develop a good understanding of cultural diversity.

Parents and carers are very positive about the school. They are especially pleased about the quality of pastoral care and the way you or a specialist member of staff will drop everything to help them when needed. Typical comments from parents included, 'My children come home full of stories of the things they have done and they look forward to returning next day,' and, 'Staff are incredibly caring and supportive.'

### **Safeguarding is effective.**

You and the leadership team have ensured that safeguarding arrangements are fit for purpose and that records are detailed and of high quality. You have established good systems for securing the safety of pupils. A recently adopted online system for sharing concerns ensures that you are able to respond to problems as soon as they arise. You work well with outside agencies to get help for families when they are having difficulties.

The leadership team provides regular safeguarding training for staff. This means that they understand their responsibilities in this area. They are diligent in looking out for potential problems. Governors check procedures regularly and ensure that the vetting of staff complies with national guidelines.

Parents are very confident that their children are kept safe. Pupils agree and they know whom to turn to if they have a worry. They are confident that concerns would be tackled quickly. As one said, 'We are like one big family.'

A recent e-safety assembly has had a good effect on pupils' understanding of the dangers they may face when using the internet. Pupils are clear about the minimum age limits for using social media. They understand what they should do and whom they should talk to if they encounter problems.

### **Inspection findings**

- At the start of the inspection, I met with you and your assistant headteachers to confirm the lines of enquiry for my day in school.
- The first of these looked at pupils' progress in writing. This was a focus because pupils' attainment in writing has historically been lower than in reading.
- My sampling of pupils' books, visits to lessons and an analysis of assessment information confirmed that progress in writing is good in most classes. You have

increased the rates at which skills are improving by making writing more purposeful and engaging. Consequently, in the current year, the attainment gap between reading and writing is closing.

- I saw that there is extremely good practice in Years 2 and 5 in the use and application of writing skills across the curriculum. However, this is not yet consistently strong in all classes. In a few, there are limited opportunities for pupils to practise and reinforce their skills by writing at length in English or in other subjects. This is slowing progress.
- My second line of enquiry checked how you ensure that the additional funding for disadvantaged pupils is used effectively. I wanted to look at this because there is limited information on this aspect of provision on the school's website.
- I found that while not all disadvantaged pupils reach the expected standard for their age by the end of Year 2 or Year 4, they make the same mainly good progress as others in English and mathematics. You have established good systems to support both the academic and social development of disadvantaged pupils and their needs are met well most of the time.
- However, reporting on the school's website on the use of the pupil premium does not meet statutory requirements. You do not evaluate the impact of spending sharply enough so that leaders can be certain about which initiatives are having the best effect and which need fine-tuning further to improve outcomes for disadvantaged pupils. We agreed that this is an area where leaders and governors could strengthen practice.
- I also looked at how well teaching meets pupils' differing needs so that work is not too easy for some. This had been identified as an area for improvement in the last inspection.
- You have secured good improvements in teaching since then. I found that teaching meets the differing needs of pupils well most of the time. Across the school, including in early years, teachers have high expectations of what their pupils, including the most able, should achieve.
- On our joint visits to lessons and when looking at books together, we saw that there are still some missed opportunities to move on the learning of the most able pupils more quickly. In some examples, they begin their work with the same lower level activity as less able pupils. Your school development plan already identifies challenge for the most able as an area for improvement and this continues to be an important priority.
- My fourth line of enquiry looked at the impact on school improvement of middle leaders, such as those in charge of subjects.
- Although some middle leaders are new to their roles, you have enabled them to take more responsibility for securing improvement, addressing the weakness found in the last inspection. Middle leaders understand their roles and responsibility and have been able to access professional training to help them hone their leadership skills. They are able to take a full part in monitoring provision and have a good understanding of the next steps in their subjects.
- Finally, as part of my focus on safeguarding, I looked at how well you are

improving the attendance of disadvantaged pupils or those who have special educational needs and/or disabilities. In the most recently published data, these groups had lower rates of attendance than others.

- Your work to tackle this is proving effective. Strategies such as calling home on the first day of a child's absence, liaising closely with outside agencies and holding face-to-face meetings with parents are helping to reduce absences. You are rightly continuing to work with parents to improve the attendance of the very small group of children who still miss school too often.

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

Leaders and those responsible for governance should ensure that:

- work provides a good level of challenge to the most able
- opportunities for pupils to write at length in English and other subjects are consistently strong in all classes
- they analyse and report in more detail on how well the pupil premium is improving outcomes for disadvantaged pupils, including on the school's website.

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

Yours sincerely

Mike Capper  
**Ofsted Inspector**

### **Information about the inspection**

During this inspection, I made observations of teaching and learning across the school during learning walks with you and your heads of school. I held meetings with school leaders and members of the governing body. I had discussions with parents at the start of the school day and scrutinised the 89 responses to Ofsted's online questionnaire, Parent View. I analysed the 20 responses to the Ofsted staff survey. I considered a range of information supplied by the school, including checks on the quality of teaching, the school's development plan, school policies, and records relating to attendance and safeguarding procedures. I listened to some pupils reading in lessons, scrutinised pupils' books in different subjects and looked at school assessment information from the current academic year.