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Mrs H Rowan  
Headteacher  
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Dear Mrs Rowan

### **Short inspection of Belthorn Academy Primary School**

Following my visit to the school on 9 May 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 May 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 are proud of what you have achieved at Belthorn in developing both staff and pupils. You are assisted very effectively by your deputy headteacher and senior leadership team. Leaders draw up plans for school improvement that contain well-focused actions and suitable ways of checking their impact on pupils' achievement. As a result, the purpose of these actions is clear. Your evaluations of their effectiveness are precise and relate directly to pupils' outcomes. Consequently, there is very good capacity to consolidate the strengths that you already demonstrate and to continue to improve the school further.

Governors have a clear view of the school's journey of improvement, and like staff, are receptive and keen to achieve even more. Governors are proud to be involved in the school and acknowledge the excitement around learning. They clearly care about the school. They are committed to improving outcomes for pupils and developing the 'whole child'.

The majority of parents and carers who responded to Parent View, Ofsted's online questionnaire, stated that their children are happy to come to school. One comment summed up the feelings of many parents: 'Belthorn is a wonderful school that both of my children enjoy attending. I feel that learning and behaviour are very well led and managed and the school has a very helpful, positive attitude towards parents and children. The change in leadership has been very noticeable and welcomed.'

Pupils show good manners when discussing their learning and when moving around school. The enthusiasm of the teachers is reflected in pupils' attitudes, especially when completing challenging work.

You have addressed the areas for improvement effectively that inspectors identified in the previous inspection report. You were asked to provide more challenge to extend pupils' learning. Leaders make sure that staff have access to training that improves their practice. Teachers now plan much more thoroughly how they will challenge pupils in their work. Effective assessment systems enable you to track groups of pupils carefully. Through pupil progress meetings with teachers, you are increasing teachers' focus on targeted groups of pupils. In lessons, pupils receive challenges and activities that encourage them to reason and explain their thinking. This has also increased teachers' expectations of what pupils can achieve.

You have also ensured that opportunities for staff training and sharing good practice are frequent. These opportunities are well planned and linked to the needs of teachers and teaching assistants. Teachers have had the opportunity to view good practice in a variety of schools. As a result, assessments are accurate through moderation. There is a positive impact on the consistency of learning, raising standards and developing middle leaders' roles in the involvement of school development planning.

During the inspection, we discussed the next steps required to enable the school to improve further. We agreed that pupils need to deepen subject-specific vocabulary across the wider curriculum to ensure that progress is as strong in these subjects as it is in English and mathematics. We also agreed that you should embed the recent strategies to develop pupils' ability to spell so that their writing continues to improve.

### **Safeguarding is effective.**

The leadership team has ensured that all safeguarding arrangements are fit for purpose. You ensure that checks on adults before they start to work or volunteer at the school meet statutory requirements. Several leaders and governors are trained in safer recruitment practices and follow the guidance well. Staff understand their responsibilities in relation to safeguarding, including what to do if they have concerns that a pupil may be at risk of harm.

Leaders take effective action to ensure that pupils get the help they need, especially for children in care. You ensure that safeguarding remains a high priority. A strong safeguarding culture runs throughout the school. Leaders make sure that staff and governors are kept up to date with training on the latest government legislation. Governors meet regularly with the headteacher to discuss safeguarding issues and to ensure that policies and practices are up to date. This includes checking the site security and that health and safety requirements are met.

Pupils said that where there are instances of falling out, adults are effective at dealing with the issues. Adults teach pupils how to stay safe. This includes knowledge about the risks of social networking and online bullying. Your knowledge of each child and their families helps you to know when pupils are facing difficulties. The vast majority of parents

responding to Parent View said that their children are safe at school.

## **Inspection findings**

- We agreed several areas of enquiry for this inspection. The first of these was the effectiveness of actions taken by leaders to improve outcomes in early years. Learning areas offer a very rich range of engaging and stimulating learning opportunities. The new nursery is having an impact on children's learning. The provision provides a good start for children and this is also having a positive impact on outcomes for children in school who attended the Nursery. Children know the expectations that staff have of them when they enter Reception and staff have a clear understanding of children's needs. Adults play an effective role in supporting children's progress. Across early years, adults encourage the use of language by modelling key words for children to repeat. This was evident at snack time in the Nursery, within phonics lessons and in outdoor activities. Some of the activities are based on children's interests, which is particularly motivating boys. As a result of these actions, evidence from children's work and from your own assessment information shows that current children in the early years are making strong progress. Boys, in particular, are showing notable improvement in their achievement in reading, writing and mathematics.
- The next area we looked at was how well you are improving outcomes for disadvantaged pupils. The statement on the use of the pupil premium is to the point and sets clear criteria by which success can be measured. You ensure that each pupil receives provision that meets their varied needs. For example, there are individual sessions with eligible pupils to support their learning in reading, writing or mathematics. This support is meeting the needs of disadvantaged pupils successfully. Current progress data across the curriculum shows that the progress these pupils are making is improving, especially in key stage 2. Work in pupils' books and your most recent performance information shows that the difference in the attainment of disadvantaged pupils and that of other pupils within school is also diminishing. Some disadvantaged pupils have extra input for spelling. However, you have identified increased skills in spelling for all pupils as an area for further improvement. This is because the new spelling strategy is not yet fully embedded across the school.
- The provision for pupils who have special educational needs (SEN) and/or disabilities is also strong. Staff expectations for these pupils are high. Leaders use funding effectively to support identified pupils. This can be seen in the way that you deploy teachers to give pupils extra help in developing their skills in English and mathematics. You work effectively with a range of outside agencies to support pupils' needs. You are proactive in accessing advice and training for staff, which results in pupils being well supported. Therefore, pupils who have SEN and/or disabilities make strong progress from their starting points.
- Finally, we looked at how well you are improving outcomes in reading. You have identified that in reading, pupils did not have not have enough opportunities to read for pleasure or for sustained periods of time. In addition, the quality of vocabulary used by pupils needed improvement. The leadership of reading is strong and the teaching of reading is now at the heart of your school. As a result of the actions taken by leaders and the improvements to the quality of teaching, your teachers are passionate about teaching children to read. This is enabling pupils to become fluent readers and to

develop their comprehension skills. Recent actions to raise the profile of reading are having a positive impact. Pupils said that they enjoy the whole-class quality texts and, in talking to me, discussed their love of reading. Pupils now read enthusiastically across a range of genres and authors. These actions are having a positive impact on current pupils' performance. Leaders have introduced new vocabulary activities across the school that are developing pupils' vocabulary in English. However, subject-specific vocabulary for other curriculum subjects is not being developed to the same high standard.

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

Leaders and those responsible for governance should ensure that:

- teachers focus on extending pupils' use of vocabulary to enhance the quality of their work across the curriculum
- they embed the recent strategies to develop pupils' ability to spell, so that pupils' writing continues to improve.

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

Yours sincerely

Simon Hunter  
**Her Majesty's Inspector**

### **Information about the inspection**

During the inspection, I spoke with pupils, both formally and informally, about their work and school life. I held meetings with you, senior staff and middle leaders to discuss improvements in their areas of responsibility. I looked at learning in pupils' books. I also spoke to the local authority's school improvement adviser.

I reviewed documentation, which included your evaluation of the school's strengths and weaknesses and the school development plan. I spoke with parents at the start of the school day and considered 32 responses to Ofsted's online survey, Parent View. I also considered 25 responses to the online staff questionnaire.

I visited classes with you to observe pupils' learning. I met with governors to discuss aspects of school leadership and management. I reviewed a range of documentation about safeguarding, including the school's record of checks undertaken on newly appointed staff.