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Mrs Karen O'Reilly  
Headteacher  
Gilbertstone Primary School  
Clay Lane  
Birmingham  
West Midlands  
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Dear Mrs O'Reilly

### **Short inspection of Gilbertstone Primary School**

Following my visit to the school on 5 June 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 March 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 your senior leaders share a passion and determination for ensuring that all pupils achieve their full potential. Since your appointment, you have continued to promote and develop the school's golden rule of 'Treat everyone as you wish to be treated.' This permeates throughout the whole school and, as the pupils say, 'It is what makes the school a happy and kind place.' This ethos was very evident throughout the inspection.

You and your senior leaders are quick to recognise where improvements need to be made. You seek out every professional development opportunity so that you and your staff have the skills to tackle the key issues in the school successfully. All staff share your commitment to improving the school, and value the support and guidance they receive to achieve this. Staff commented:

'We have a caring and family-like team, where staff are continually encouraged to ask for help if they need it and seek support from a range of people in school. The headteacher shows a strong compassion for all the staff and their well-being.'

Your openness to advice and support means that the school has continued to develop and improve since the last inspection.

Pupils are very proud of their school, especially the way in which diversity is celebrated. They say, 'Everyone is inclusive of all. It doesn't matter what religion you are or if you have a disability, nobody judges you in a bad way.' Celebration of diversity is further developed through projects such as, 'All different, all equal', which took place during anti-bullying week. Parents and carers are also supportive of the school and appreciate the family atmosphere that you and your staff have created.

At the time of the last inspection, you were asked to develop pupils' mathematical problem-solving and reasoning skills and to increase their opportunities to apply these skills in other subjects. The school has successfully achieved this. Pupils have regular opportunities to deepen their mathematical learning in problem solving and reasoning. Their participation in the enterprise activities further supports this area of their learning. They are able to apply their mathematical skills in real-life contexts, working with companies such as financial institutions and local businesses. This has not only helped pupils to develop their mathematical skills, but has also helped them to develop a range of 'learning for life' skills to help them to be successful in their future careers. As a result of these engaging and purposeful learning activities, pupils demonstrate an eagerness to learn and strive to achieve their very best.

The last inspection also identified that more teaching could be of the highest standard. You and your senior leaders place a high priority on the professional development of all staff. You use both the expertise of your own staff and also seek training, guidance and support from outside the school to ensure that the school's improvement journey continues. You monitor the quality of teaching closely, ensuring that you take time to consider the strengths and areas of improvement in every aspect of teaching and learning. This detailed consideration means that you are able to provide swift and effective support where needed to improve teaching. Consequently, the quality of teaching and learning is now consistently good across the school, and continues to improve. While you and your senior leaders are highly effective in your roles, you recognise that recently appointed middle leaders require further professional development to help them become more effective in their roles, especially in monitoring the quality of teaching and learning, and tracking pupils' progress in greater detail.

### **Safeguarding is effective.**

The leadership team has ensured that all safeguarding arrangements are fit for purpose. Appropriate checks are carried out on all staff who work in school, including those who are new to the school. All staff are committed to keeping pupils as safe as possible and understand what to do if they have any concerns about a pupil.

Pupils learn how to keep themselves safe in a range of ways through the curriculum. Their understanding of e-safety is particularly well developed. They know that their use of the internet in school is monitored, and understand that they must not share their personal details with anyone online.

You also use the local police to further develop parents' understanding of e-safety to help them monitor their child's use of the internet at home.

### **Inspection findings**

- As a result of a drop in pupils' writing outcomes at the end of key stage 2 in 2017, you have placed a strong focus on improving writing across the school. You have developed teachers' understanding of what pupils should achieve in each year group to enable them to prepare pupils for the challenges of the following year. Teachers now develop pupils' writing skills more effectively from one year to the next and have higher expectations of what they can achieve. You and your senior leaders track individual pupils' progress in detail to check that they are making the progress they should, identifying quickly any pupil who is falling behind in their learning. This enables you to take swift action to help them catch up.
- In addition to this, you have introduced a new approach to the teaching of writing. Writing is developed 'hand in hand' with reading. Pupils' use of vocabulary is widened through reading, which they then apply in their writing. In addition to this, the 'Gilbertstone Givens' set out clear expectations of the grammar and punctuation skills that pupils have to apply in their writing in each year group. Pupils also have many opportunities to apply their writing skills in a range of different subjects, the quality of which is of an equally high standard as that in their English work. As a result of the training and new teaching methods, current pupils are making better progress in their writing, with a greater proportion of pupils achieving the higher standards of learning in writing.
- You recognised that there was a lack of challenge for some pupils, especially the most able. Again, you have taken effective action to address this over the last two years. Teachers plan carefully to ensure that all pupils receive an appropriate level of challenge to enable them to achieve their full potential. All lessons provide pupils with the opportunity to undertake 'Gilbert's challenges', which deepen their learning. Pupils talk enthusiastically about 'Gilbert's challenges' and say that these help them to improve their work. Work in pupils' books shows that the most able pupils receive a high level of challenge across all areas of the curriculum. Consequently, they are making strong progress, especially in English and mathematics.
- Governors have a detailed understanding of the school's strengths and areas for improvement. They appreciate the transparency of the leadership team and the detailed information they receive about how the school is performing. However, once they receive this information, they check that it reflects accurately what is happening in the school. You and your leaders respond positively and proactively to the governors' challenges to further improve outcomes for all pupils. Governors are, rightly, proud of the inclusivity of the school and recognise that 'every child is celebrated', no matter what their need is.
- Pupils' behaviour is exemplary. In lessons and at social times, pupils are polite, respectful and highly considerate of one another and all adults. Pupils' attitudes to learning are also extremely positive and they show a true desire to learn.

This is due to the rich and engaging curriculum that you and your staff have developed, and the strong relationships between pupils and staff. Pupils say that they enjoy learning because the teachers make it fun. Gilbertstone Primary School provides pupils with an exceptionally positive educational experience which prepares them very well not only for the next stage of their education, but also for life in a diverse and modern society.

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

Leaders and those responsible for governance should ensure that:

- middle leaders further develop their leadership skills in monitoring pupils' outcomes and the quality of teaching and learning.

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

Ann Pritchard  
**Her Majesty's Inspector**

### **Information about the inspection**

I met with you, members of the governing body and members of your leadership team. I talked to pupils about their learning, visited lessons across key stage 2 and looked at examples of pupils' work. I observed pupils' behaviour before school, during breaktime and at lunchtime. I spoke to parents and to pupils informally throughout the day. I also met formally with a group of pupils. I reviewed a range of documentation, including the school's own evaluation of its performance, the school development plan, documents relating to keeping pupils safe, and the most recent information about pupils' achievement. I considered the 36 responses from parents to Ofsted's online questionnaire and the 28 responses to the staff questionnaire. There were no responses to the pupil questionnaire.