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Miss E Hart
Brandhall Primary School
Brennand Road
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Dear Miss Hart

Requires improvement: monitoring inspection visit to Brandhall Primary School

Following my visit to your school on 14 June 2018, I write on behalf of Her Majesty's Chief Inspector of Education, Children's Services and Skills to report the monitoring inspection findings. Thank you for the help you gave me and for the time you made available to discuss the actions you are taking to improve the school since the most recent section 5 inspection.

The monitoring inspection was carried out under section 8 of the Education Act 2005 and has taken place because the school has received two successive judgements of requires improvement at its previous section 5 inspections.

Senior leaders and governors are taking effective action to tackle the areas requiring improvement identified at the last section 5 inspection in order for the school to become good.

The school should take further action to:

- ensure that pupils, in particular lower-ability pupils, further develop their reasoning skills by using their mathematical knowledge and language to explain their understanding more effectively
- ensure that teachers check that pupils practise spellings accurately
- ensure that leaders continue to further develop investigative skills and challenge for pupils across the curriculum.

Evidence

During the inspection, I met with you, senior leaders, middle leaders, governors and a representative of the local authority to discuss actions taken since the last inspection. I looked at a range of documentation, including the school's own self-evaluation, improvement plan and the checks made on the quality of teaching. In addition, I considered minutes of governing body meetings, monitoring and

evaluation reports and information about pupils' progress and attainment. I visited each year group with you and we looked at pupils' work. I spoke to pupils on the school council and I gathered the views of a small group of parents and carers at the beginning of the school day. I also examined the single central record of staff recruitment checks.

Context

The structure of the leadership team is the same as at the last inspection. Staffing is mostly stable, although the special educational needs coordinator resigned during this academic year. Four newly qualified teachers joined the school in September 2017 and one has subsequently left after covering a temporary post.

Main findings

Since the last inspection, you, the leadership team and governors have made significant improvements in the school. You have developed effective plans to address the areas identified at the last inspection. Your self-evaluation is accurate. Your systems for measuring the impact of actions on pupils' progress within clearly defined timescales are now more rigorous. As a result, all leaders, including governors, have a clear overview of the improvements that are effective and the next steps that need to be taken.

You have taken effective action to develop middle leaders through high-quality training and support. You have clear expectations for the role of subject leaders and you hold them to account. They are focused and share your drive and determination to further improve education in the school. They scrutinise planning, check the quality of pupils' work, analyse assessment information and support other staff in the development of their teaching. They are rapidly developing their own expertise in leadership and are using it well to influence the work of others and to improve outcomes for pupils.

You and other leaders monitor the quality of teaching regularly and outcomes for pupils rigorously to ensure that there is continuous improvement. You address weaker teaching swiftly. You provide newly qualified teachers with high-quality support to become effective practitioners. Teachers receive prompt feedback about the quality of their teaching, with areas for development clearly identified. Teachers take ownership of their development and review their practice within specific timescales on 'feedback impact sheets'. You systematically follow up the areas identified for improvement. You have developed a strong culture of improvement through the sharing of good practice. Consequently, the quality of teaching continues to improve. As a result of improved teaching, the overall progress and attainment for almost all pupils in most year groups are improving.

You have ensured that pupils now have a much better understanding of tolerance and respect. Members of the school council spoke with confidence about British values. They designed a wristband that pupils wear in school, which says 'all different, all equal'. They say that it is 'OK to be different' and 'If everyone was the

same, it would be boring.' You provide opportunities to develop tolerance and respect through the curriculum and through the school's values. For example, in assemblies and lessons, you focus on themes such as belonging, fairness, democracy and respect. Pupils demonstrate a high level of respect for each other and for adults in the school. Pupils learn about different faiths and share their own experiences and cultures. They are proud that people in their school are not judged on the basis of their appearance, their religion or because they like different things.

Pupils demonstrate a clear understanding of bullying. They know about different types of bullying, such as cyber bullying. The school council has developed a guide to support pupils in how to respond to bullying. They say that there is no bullying in school but, if there were, an adult would deal with it. The school's own questionnaire shows that almost all parents who responded agreed that their child would know how to deal with a bully. All said that their child was safe at school.

Staff have received training to support pupils' learning better through more effective questioning and additional challenge, especially for the most able pupils. Your observations of teaching and work in books show that this is improving. Teachers identify the most able pupils in their planning to ensure that activities are appropriate to their ability. For example, the most able children in Reception wrote a story independently while other children worked with the class teacher. They structured their story well using phonetically plausible words and accurate spellings of common exception words, such as 'the', 'to' and 'they'. Pupils work hard, take a pride in their work and are challenged to improve further. Assessment information shows that the most able pupils across the school are now making better progress than at the same point last year.

You are also providing more opportunities for pupils to undertake investigative activities across the curriculum. Pupils are developing their skills to prove and explain their learning in subjects such as geography, history and science. For example, in geography, pupils are asked, 'How do we know how old places are?' In science, pupils are encouraged to 'think like a scientist' and consider questions such as 'How does distance affect sound?' This is having a positive impact on pupils' progress in these particular subjects. You have recently attended training and are continuing to further develop your curriculum.

In mathematics, pupils are now given frequent opportunities to develop their skills in problem-solving and reasoning. However, currently, they do not consistently use their knowledge and mathematical language well enough when explaining their learning. Lower-ability pupils complete a range of problem-solving activities, in particular word problems and calculations, but they do not have as many opportunities as other pupils to practise their reasoning skills.

Teachers consistently address errors in spelling across the curriculum. As a result of this increased emphasis and focus and regular assessments, spelling is now improving. However, some pupils practise spellings inaccurately and this is not always noticed. Sometimes, this occurs because the example the teacher has given is not written clearly.

External support

You have used external support well, in particular to develop your middle leaders. The support from the local authority has been helpful. You and the staff respond well to professional development and have improved areas such as guided reading and mastery in the curriculum. You and the team are open, reflective and outward-looking. You seek support and advice from outstanding schools and use this to improve your practice. You work alongside other schools to moderate your judgements of pupils' work and liaise with other subject leaders. You are currently taking part in an action research project to improve speaking and listening in the early years.

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

Yours sincerely

Sue Cameron
Her Majesty's Inspector