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Mrs Kim Hewlett
Headteacher
Broadmead Lower School
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Dear Mrs Hewlett

Short inspection of Broadmead Lower School

Following my visit to the school on 12 July 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.

Based on the evidence gathered during this short inspection, I have identified some priorities for improvement which I advise the school to address. In light of these priorities, the school's next inspection will be a full section 5 inspection. **There is no change to the school's current overall effectiveness grade of good as a result of this inspection.**

Since the previous inspection, standards have declined. Published data for both 2016 and 2017 shows that pupils' attainment was below average at the end of the early years and key stage 1. You have taken decisive action to improve the quality of teaching, learning and assessment in the school in order to raise pupils' attainment and progress. However, despite your determined efforts, sustained improvement has been hindered by variations in the quality of teaching and leadership capacity. These inconsistencies have also undermined you in fully addressing all the areas for improvement which were identified at the time of the previous inspection.

Broadmead Lower School is a warm and welcoming school whose caring ethos is evident. Strong values underpin all aspects of school life and support the development of pupils' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development effectively. This is demonstrated by pupils' positive attitudes towards each other and adults. Parents and carers are happy with the school. A typical statement was, 'It is a fantastic little school where everyone knows and supports each other.' The overwhelming majority of parents would recommend the school to others.

You and your leaders understand the school well. You have accurately identified the school's strengths and weaknesses, and your improvement plans focus on appropriate priorities. There are some indications that recent initiatives are having a positive impact on pupils' progress and attainment, for example the school's new approach to teaching mathematics. However, you are aware that the attainment and progress of some groups of pupils are not strong enough. You have appointed new teachers and leaders for the next academic year and are confident that this strengthened teaching and leadership team will bring about more rapid and sustained improvement for all groups of learners.

Governors know the school well and visit regularly to ensure that statutory duties are met and that you are addressing school priorities effectively. They agree that there is work still to be done to ensure that all pupils, especially those who are disadvantaged, make the progress that they should as a result of consistently strong teaching and regular attendance.

Safeguarding is effective.

The leadership team and governors have ensured that all safeguarding procedures are fit for purpose.

All staff understand their responsibilities for ensuring that pupils remain safe. This is because they receive regular and up-to-date training. All staff understand the school's systems for reporting concerns. They are vigilant and proactive. Recruitment processes are secure, and all statutory requirements are met.

Pupils feel safe in school. The happy environment means that bullying or unkind behaviour is rare. Pupils are confident that any concerns they do have will be dealt with swiftly. Parents agree that this is the case. One commented: 'This is a very warm and friendly school. My daughter has enjoyed going to school here and I feel she has been given the tools she needs to start middle school in September.'

Inspection findings

- In order to ascertain whether the school continues to be good, I pursued a number of lines of enquiry. The first of these was to determine how effective leaders' actions have been in improving pupils' outcomes at the end of key stage 1. In 2017, the proportion of pupils who reached the expected attainment level in reading, writing and mathematics at the end of key stage 1 was below average. The proportion of pupils who exceeded the expected standard in these subjects was also below average.
- I considered a range of evidence relating to teaching, learning and assessment. You and I observed teaching and learning in all classes and scrutinised pupils' work in their books. We saw evidence of good progress in some classes but also that there is inconsistency in pupils' progress across the school between year groups and subjects. Additionally, not all pupils are presenting their work as neatly as they should and not all teachers have the same high standards in terms of their expectations of pupils' presentation.

- The new approach to the teaching of mathematics is improving pupils' calculation skills, as well as developing their reasoning and problem-solving competencies. The subject leader for mathematics has ensured that all current staff have received effective training this year. There are appropriate plans in place to further develop this new approach. For example, the school is going to be part of a research group, which will provide continued support for the purchase of new resources and further training. The school's most recent tracking information suggests that many current pupils are making good progress in reading, writing and mathematics and that attainment is rising. However, the work that I looked at in pupils' books does not consistently bear this out. You have identified that improving the accuracy of teacher assessment is an improvement priority.
- My second line of enquiry related to the early years. This was because the proportion of children achieving the expected good level of development at the end of this stage has fluctuated and been below average for two of the last three years. You explained that there are a high proportion of children who start in early years with no pre-school experience. Many of these children are also classed as disadvantaged and have poor attendance.
- We observed children learning in the early years and considered evidence of their progress over the year through scrutiny of their 'learning journeys' and other work. The early years environment is rich and vibrant, and provides well for all areas of learning, particularly inside. All children showed sustained concentration on their activities, which were themed around food, linked to the school's 'healthy week'. 'Learning journeys' and pupils' writing on display show clear progress for individual pupils from the start of the year. This supports the school's most recent assessments, which indicate that a higher proportion of children have achieved the expected standard in 2018. However, this remains below the national average.
- I next considered attendance. This was because pupils' attendance overall is below average. The attendance of some groups of pupils, including those who are disadvantaged, is low. Persistent absence for these groups is also high.
- The school tracks the attendance of all pupils assiduously. It ensures that the importance of regular attendance and its impact on pupils' attainment and progress is understood by pupils and parents alike. Leaders work hard to foster effective links with parents and carers to improve the attendance of key groups of disadvantaged children.
- The local authority also supports the school in their work with these families. This includes visits to home communities. Families who have difficulty getting their children to school are supported in a variety of ways. The local authority provides transport for those who are of statutory school age. The school nurse supports them with any medical issues, and other agencies are also involved when this is deemed appropriate. The latest school information on attendance shows a slight improvement. However, the attendance of some groups of disadvantaged pupils remains low. Leaders and governors know that continuing to improve attendance remains a key priority.
- Finally, I explored how effectively the school uses the additional funding for disadvantaged pupils to ensure that they make good progress from their starting

points and attain well. Published data for the end of the early years and key stage 1 indicates that these pupils do not attain as well as their peers in school or other pupils nationally.

- In order to accelerate the progress of disadvantaged pupils, the school has invested most of the additional funding it receives in providing more adult support. This year, an extra learning area has been set up where pupils benefit from additional help, as well as the adult support they receive within the classroom. The indications are that the progress of disadvantaged pupils is accelerating and differences in their attainment and that of others are diminishing. However, it is too soon to see the full impact of this recent initiative. Leaders and governors have rightly identified that further improving the progress and attainment of disadvantaged pupils is a key priority.

Next steps for the school

Leaders and those responsible for governance should ensure that:

- they fully implement their plans to: strengthen leadership and teaching; secure the recent new approaches to the teaching of mathematics in all classes; and improve pupils' presentation of their work
- strategies to improve the progress and attainment of disadvantaged pupils are consolidated and their impact carefully checked to ensure that differences continue to diminish
- all teachers make accurate assessments of pupils' attainment and progress
- they continue to work closely with the families of those groups of disadvantaged pupils who do not attend school regularly, to ensure that their attendance improves.

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

Joan Beale
Ofsted Inspector

Information about the inspection

I held discussions with you about the key lines of enquiry for this inspection, the school's self-evaluation of its performance, plans for future improvement and information about current pupils' progress and attainment. Meetings were held with subject and senior leaders, three governors and a representative of the local authority.

We visited all classrooms together to observe teaching, learning and assessment, and looked at the work in pupils' books in a range of subjects.

I met with a group of pupils to talk about their experiences at school and also talked more informally with pupils in lessons and at breaktime. I scrutinised safeguarding policies and practice, including systems for safe recruitment of staff.

The views of 42 parents who responded to Ofsted's online questionnaire, Parent View, were taken into account, as well as 26 responses using the free text service. I also considered the views of the parents I spoke with during the inspection.