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Miss C Brown
Headteacher
The Berkeley Academy
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Dear Miss Brown

Short inspection of The Berkeley Academy

Following my visit to the school on 24 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 your predecessor school was judged to be good in December 2012.

This school continues to be good.

The leadership team has maintained the good quality of education in the school since the last inspection. Based on the evidence gathered during this short inspection, I am of the opinion that the school has demonstrated strong practice and marked improvement in specific areas. This may indicate that the school has improved significantly overall. Therefore, I am recommending that the school's next inspection be a section 5 inspection.

You work in a highly effective manner with your deputy headteacher to develop leadership at all levels and to provide the very best possible education for the pupils in your care. Together, you have devised a curriculum which inspires and excites pupils. The sign outside the school says, 'It is all about doing your best.' This ethos was evident throughout the inspection. Your pupils received strong encouragement and support from all staff.

Leaders have named all main rooms in the school after famous British people. For example, the 'Shakespeare' library contains a biography displayed for pupils to read and raises awareness of William Shakespeare's influence on British culture. This teaches pupils about the importance of aspiration and achievement. It ensures that they have positive role models to aspire to.

You also display information outside each classroom highlighting the strengths of different subjects in the curriculum and the areas where leaders are planning for improvements. As a result, parents and carers, pupils and teachers share the

school's improvement journey. They are clear on the areas to celebrate and those to strive towards. As a result, your school has clear direction.

The governors bring a wealth of experience to support school improvement. They know the school well and share your passion for providing the very best care for the pupils. They offer focused support to leaders and challenge them effectively. This contributes to the development of the school.

Your pupils are an absolute credit to you and to your team. They are polite, well behaved and caring. They value greatly the opportunities that you provide for them to take on leadership roles in school such as school councillors, digital leaders and safeguarding representatives. They have admirable views on diversity. One pupil, reflecting the views of many others, noted, 'It's all right to be different – if we were all the same, it would be boring.'

Almost all parents who responded to Parent View, Ofsted's online questionnaire, were highly supportive of the school. One parent's comment summed up the many positive ones: 'The school is well run. It both challenges and encourages the children. The staff are professional, friendly and approachable.'

Staff are fully supportive of the senior leadership in the school. All staff who completed the online survey prior to the inspection said that leaders do all they can to ensure that the school has a motivated, respected and effective teaching staff. Consequently, they are proud to be members of the school.

During the inspection, we discussed an area where leaders need to improve further the performance of the school. You are aware, from the school's most recent published performance information, that the achievement of some pupils in writing does not match the high standard of achievement seen in other areas of English, mathematics and science.

Safeguarding is effective.

The leadership team ensures that all safeguarding arrangements are of a high standard. Leaders make sure that the school site is secure and that staff check the identity of visitors when they arrive. All required checks take place so that adults in the school do not pose any threat. Staff and governors receive a wide range of training to ensure that they are clear about their responsibilities to protect pupils.

Your pupil safeguarding team is aware of the importance of personal safety and support you in ensuring that the school site remains safe. For example, the team identified a gap in a fence, informed staff and took pride in the fact that leaders organised a repair quickly.

Pupils understand how to keep themselves safe both online and in the wider world. This is because you provide them with a broad range of opportunities to explore safety. For example, members of the police and the fire service visit the school. Additionally, pupils meet with The National Society for the Prevention of Cruelty to

Children to discuss well-being. You also ensure that pupils receive regular e-safety guidance. Consequently, they feel safe in school and understand how to keep themselves safe and healthy.

Inspection findings

- At the start of the inspection, I shared several lines of enquiry with you. At the end of the Reception Year, the proportion of children who achieve a good level of development is consistently well above that seen nationally. However, while remaining well above the national average, the percentage of children achieving the early learning goals in reading and writing has shown a slight decline. To address this issue, leaders have introduced a screening programme to assess children's communication skills on entry to Reception. Teachers use information from this screening to provide children with focused support for reading and writing.
- Teachers ensure that they teach phonics in a systematic way throughout Nursery and Reception. They also weave opportunities for formal teaching of reading and writing in an effective manner through the curriculum. The indoor and outdoor learning environments in both Nursery and Reception provide a range of reading and writing activities which children use in a highly effective manner. As a result, the school's most recent unvalidated performance information in 2018 shows an increase in the number of children achieving the reading and writing early learning goals. The information also shows that the proportion of children achieving a good level of development has continued to rise and remains well above that seen nationally.
- My next line of enquiry considered what leaders are doing to ensure that pupils' performance in writing matches their performance in reading and mathematics at key stages 1 and 2. To improve pupils' performance, leaders have altered the way in which teachers develop pupils' writing skills throughout the school. This is to ensure that there are increased opportunities to develop their communication skills and vocabulary. Leaders have introduced high-quality reading texts to excite and engage the pupils further in their writing. Pupils have opportunities to practise their writing skills in subjects across the curriculum. Work in pupils' books and displays throughout the school show evidence of strong progress in writing. Additionally, the school's most recent unvalidated performance information at the end of key stages 1 and 2 shows that pupils' attainment is well above the standard seen nationally. However, leaders are aware that the new system for teaching writing requires further time to embed. This is to ensure that it accelerates further the progress that pupils make.
- Leaders are working hard to ensure that the small number of disadvantaged pupils in the school receive the support they require to attend school regularly and achieve well. Leaders offer personalised support to all pupils who have low attendance. They promote regular attendance by linking pupils with a mentor who offers them additional support and advice. As a result, the attendance of many disadvantaged pupils has significantly improved.
- Leaders have found that a major barrier to the learning of many disadvantaged pupils is the social and emotional issues they experience. Leaders use additional

funding effectively to provide a 'creative-action team'. Working in this environment, disadvantaged pupils undertake activities that cater for their individual needs. This has a positive impact on these pupils, giving them increased confidence and self-esteem. Your school's most recent performance information shows that disadvantaged pupils are making increased levels of progress.

- You ensure that all pupils enjoy a rich, exciting and engaging curriculum. You focus the teaching of all subjects on knowledge and understanding of the world, enquiry, emotional intelligence and enterprise. This curriculum design enables pupils to make strong connections with local and national issues. You expertly weave key skills such as resilience and respect through your curriculum.
- You provide pupils with a broad range of opportunities to work independently to explore their learning in areas that interest them. In science, for example, pupils undertake scientific experiments in school and at home. They receive a 'bachelor of science' award to highlight achievement in this area. Leaders share their expertise and success in this area with other local schools. The quality of pupils' work in books and on display around the school is of a high standard. Leaders are justly proud to have achieved the primary quality science mark at gold level.
- Pupils are enthusiastic about the broad range of opportunities provided for them in their curriculum. Evidence provided during the inspection shows that the high standard of performance in reading, writing and mathematics is consistent across the curriculum in subjects such as science, geography and history. Sport is another area where pupils excel. They undertake a wide range of activities in physical education and sport lessons both during and after school. They are very proud of the gold sport award received by their school to mark sporting achievement.

Next steps for the school

Leaders and those responsible for governance should ensure that:

- leaders and teachers further embed new systems to develop the teaching of writing to ensure that pupils' progress continues to accelerate.

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

Yours sincerely

Gill Pritchard
Her Majesty's Inspector

Information about the inspection

During the inspection, I held meetings with you, your deputy headteacher and senior leaders to discuss issues relating to school improvement. I also met with five governors, including the chair of the governing body. I spoke with the school's business manager about staff recruitment procedures. I met your safeguarding leader to discuss procedures to keep pupils safe. I also spoke to the school's improvement officer from the local authority. I had a formal discussion with a group of pupils about their personal development, behaviour and welfare. We also discussed their learning.

Accompanied by you, I visited a range of classes across the school. I observed pupils' behaviour during lessons and as they moved around the school. I scrutinised examples of pupils' work and reviewed documents, including your record of checks on the suitability of staff and volunteers to work with children. I also examined the school's self-evaluation, improvement planning and current performance information. I considered 36 responses to Ofsted's staff survey, 162 responses to Ofsted's pupil survey, 154 responses to Parent View, Ofsted's online parent questionnaire, and 152 free-text responses. I also considered information posted on the school's website and a letter provided by a member of a pupil's family.