

7 November 2018

Mrs N Lawton  
Headteacher  
Pebble Brook Primary School  
Balmoral Avenue  
Crewe  
Cheshire  
CW2 6PL

Dear Mrs Lawton

### **Short inspection of Pebble Brook Primary School**

Following my visit to the school on 17 October 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.

#### **This school continues to be good.**

The leadership team has maintained the good quality of education in the school since the last inspection. Together with your dedicated senior leadership team, you work hard to ensure that pupils have high aspirations. In designing your curriculum, you place great emphasis on the areas of 'community, possibilities, creativity and mindfulness'. The emphasis on these key aspects is evident in the way in which you organise the pupils' learning and provide social and emotional support.

Your classrooms are bright and engaging. Leaders use central spaces effectively to excite pupils in their thinking and support their pastoral needs. For example, a sensory room that provides pupils with opportunities to relax and reflect, surrounded by mood lighting, music and images on a screen of fish swimming in the ocean, is used effectively.

Parents and carers appreciate the work that you do to support their children. The majority of those who responded to Parent View, Ofsted's online questionnaire, were positive about the school. One comment, reflecting the views of many, noted, 'The headteacher has done so much to make the school a positive place for children to go to.'

You receive support from a dedicated board of governors. Governors know the school well and are fully committed to its development. You receive an equally high level of support from your school staff. All those who completed Ofsted's online staff survey agreed that they were proud to be members of staff and that the school is led and managed effectively.

Pupils speak highly of the school. They value the opportunities that you provide for them to contribute to school life in roles such as head boy and head girl, school ambassador and librarian. Pupils I spoke to during the inspection had a clear respect for the link between hard work at school and achieving their aspirations. They take the transition to secondary school seriously and want to do their best.

In the previous inspection, inspectors noted that the role of middle leaders should be developed further. This has been addressed successfully. Middle leaders receive training to ensure that they provide teachers with effective support. You provide middle leaders with regular time to undertake their leadership duties. As a result, they have guided teachers through a range of new initiatives, such as those to develop the teaching of writing, mathematics and science. Middle leaders monitor subject development by observing teaching and looking at pupils' books. Such focused support has contributed to good teaching and increases in outcomes for pupils across the school.

The previous inspector also noted that the teaching of writing, including handwriting and spelling, needed further improvement. While leaders have made progress in this area, we agreed to look at the development of writing as part of the inspection.

During the inspection, we discussed the next steps required to enable the school to improve further. Although much progress has been made in children's learning in early years, there is a need to increase further the proportion of children achieving a good level of development by the end of Reception Year. Additionally, leaders do not always provide the appropriate support to enable the younger pupils to practise effectively their phonic skills at home. Finally, leaders should embed further the system for tracking the progress of all groups of pupils to ensure that the challenge in lessons for the most able pupils continues to increase.

### **Safeguarding is effective.**

You work closely with senior leaders to ensure that all safeguarding arrangements are effective. Your school site is secure and visitors are checked on entry to ensure that they pose no threat to pupils.

Governors and staff complete regular safeguarding training and the annual audit of safeguarding procedures ensures that they are clear on the procedures to keep pupils safe. Systems to protect the most vulnerable pupils are securely in place and allow leaders to work effectively with external agencies.

Pupils have a clear understanding of how to stay safe both online and in the real world. They value the opportunities that you provide for them to meet representatives from groups such as the police force and the fire service, who help them to learn about the importance of personal safety. Pupils have a strong understanding of the importance of diversity and talked during the inspection about ways in which their school promotes this. For example, they highlighted posters displayed in the corridors that help them to understand the wide range of different families that children belong to. Your 'random acts of kindness' display also serves

to encourage pupils to consider the needs of others.

## **Inspection findings**

- At the start of the inspection, I shared with you a number of lines of enquiry. The first considered children's progress in Reception Year. Your data indicates that the majority of children who enter Reception lack the skills needed to begin their education in an effective manner. From this point, teachers provide children with a wide range of opportunities both inside the classroom and outdoors to challenge their thinking and develop their skills. Your efforts show a good level of success. Work in children's books, plus your own analysis of their development, show that children make good progress throughout Reception Year from their starting points. In 2018, the number of children achieving a good level of development increased significantly. However, this number is below the national average and leaders should build further upon the success achieved so far.
- We also looked at how effectively pupils develop reading skills throughout school. This included their understanding of phonics. Teachers ensure that all pupils receive focused daily teaching in phonics. They encourage pupils to apply their learning in other subjects across the curriculum. Pupils who begin to fall behind receive additional support from well-trained teaching assistants. As a result, the school's results in the phonic screening check have increased significantly in 2018 at both Year 1 and Year 2. However, leaders are aware that the books pupils take home do not always contain the words that pupils have been practising in school. Additionally, opportunities for parents and carers to visit the school to learn more about the teaching of phonics are limited and do not provide enough guidance for parents to support their children at home.
- Leaders identify that many pupils enter school with levels of vocabulary that are below those that are typical for their age. Teachers are aware of this and work hard to ensure that all pupils gain regular opportunities to develop their knowledge and understanding of words. This has been successful. You ensure that aspects of your wider curriculum, such as writing and science, focus specifically on ways to develop pupils' broader vocabulary.
- The school is a literacy-rich environment. Classrooms have dedicated reading areas with high-quality fiction and non-fiction books. The pupils are particularly proud of their school library, which promotes a love of reading. It is bright and well presented and contains a wide range of books that pupils take home to read. Pupils enjoy reading widely and often. Those I spoke to during the inspection told me that they love their library.
- Pupils receive focused teaching across a range of reading skills. Sports coaches work with groups of disadvantaged pupils to broaden their reading interests from a starting point of sport and develop their knowledge and understanding. As a consequence of developments in this subject, the proportion of pupils achieving at both the expected and the higher levels in reading has increased over time, across the school. Published performance information at key stage 2 in 2017 shows a rising trend of attainment and significantly improved progress for all pupils, with the progress of disadvantaged pupils being in the top 20% of schools nationally.
- My next line of enquiry considered how effective leaders and teachers have been

in raising pupils' achievement in writing at key stages 1 and 2. There is much to celebrate in this area. Throughout school, leaders now ensure a consistent approach to the teaching of writing. Teachers successfully link the teaching of reading and writing. This has been highly effective in developing further pupils' vocabulary and their love of literature. This is clear in the work in pupils' books, which shows good progress for all pupils, including those who are disadvantaged. You are justly proud of your most recent provisional performance information at the end of key stage 2 in 2018, which shows that all pupils, including those who are disadvantaged, typically make strong progress.

- Leaders have worked hard to develop pupils' spelling and handwriting since the last inspection. This too has been successful. Pupils' practise their spelling and handwriting regularly. The work in their books shows a high level of accuracy and presentation is typically of a high standard. Pupils whom I spoke with during the inspection told me that good levels of handwriting and spelling will help them as they move towards their secondary education.
- My final line of enquiry looked at the level of challenge teachers provide in lessons to ensure that pupils reach the higher standards at key stage 2. The work undertaken to align the teaching of English more closely to pupils' needs is ensuring that an increased proportion of pupils reach the higher standards by the end of key stage 2. Additionally, a whole-school focus on mathematics is enabling all pupils, including the most able, to develop their skills further. Work in pupils' books shows that pupils are developing their skills well in problem solving and mastery activities. As a result, the school's published performance information, including the most recent provisional information at the end of key stage 2 in 2018, shows improvements in the proportion of pupils reaching the higher standards in reading, writing and mathematics. However, further work is required in this area to ensure that this proportion continues to increase, especially for disadvantaged pupils, to reflect national data.
- Leaders have recently introduced a new system for analysing the progress and attainment of all groups of pupils. This system is beginning to allow leaders and teachers to identify more efficiently the needs of specific groups of pupils in school. However, leaders need further time to fully embed this system to ensure that teachers use it to best effect to further support the needs of all groups, most notably the most able pupils.

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

Leaders and those responsible for governance should ensure that they:

- build upon improvements in early years, so that an even greater proportion of children achieve a good level of development by the end of Reception Year
- develop further pupils' skills in phonics, by ensuring that the books pupils take home enable them to practise the sounds they are currently learning in school, and by providing further opportunities for parents to learn how to support their children's understanding of the sounds that letters and words represent
- fully embed the new system to analyse pupils' progress, to ensure that assessment is used effectively to continue to increase the level of challenge for

the most able pupils, including those who are disadvantaged.

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 spoke with pupils about their school life and their understanding of safety. I held meetings with you and your deputy and assistant headteachers to discuss your school's evaluation of its performance and safeguarding procedures. I met with seven governors to discuss aspects of school leadership and safeguarding. I also spoke with middle leaders to discuss the developments in their role. I spoke with teachers to discuss the curriculum. Finally, I spoke with the school's improvement adviser and a representative from the local authority.

I looked at learning in books and reviewed documentation, which included your evaluation of the school's strengths and areas for improvement and the school development plan. I considered 29 responses to Ofsted's online survey, Parent View, 38 responses from the pupil questionnaire and 30 responses from the staff questionnaire.

I visited the Reception class and classes in key stage 1 and key stage 2, together with your deputy and assistant headteachers, to observe pupils' learning. I reviewed a range of safeguarding documentation, including the school's record of checks undertaken on newly appointed staff.