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Mrs Wendy Smith
Headteacher
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Dear Mrs Smith

Short inspection of Barleyhurst Park Primary School

Following my visit to the school on 18 December 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 January 2015.

This school continues to be good.

The leadership team has maintained the good quality of education in the school since the last inspection. As headteacher, you have steered the school successfully through a period of substantial change. Often this has entailed you having to take on extra commitments, such as teaching mathematics, to ensure that pupils continue to receive a good standard of education. In the last year, around half of the current teaching staff have joined the school. They have settled in quickly due to the 'caring and effective induction' they have received. Staff are passionate about pupils developing a love of learning and reaching their full potential. All staff who responded to the Ofsted questionnaire said they are proud to work at this school. They support your aims and vision wholeheartedly.

Pupils enjoy attending Barleyhurst Park. They say they like school because they 'have good friends, kind teachers and nice treats'. All pupils who responded to Ofsted's survey or were spoken to during the inspection said they enjoy coming to school. Pupils say they feel valued and that their views are listened to. Parents are very supportive of the school. One parent, expressing views typical of many, commented, 'Barleyhurst Park is a great school. My children love it and have made great progress.' Parents consider the school to be well run. They say that staff are very approachable and often go 'above and beyond' to help their children.

You have ensured that governance is now strong. Following a review of governance, in June 2017, the majority of the governing body resigned. The local authority then stepped in to provide appropriate support. During the summer you

managed to recruit a number of governors, who took up their roles in September 2018. They are committed individuals who recognise that in the past some aspects of governance had been allowed to drift. These aspects include: the lack of governors' visible involvement in school life; responsibility for checking the compliance of the school's website; and the regular review of policies. In the last three months, governors have set about addressing many of these areas with determination. They have completed an impressive number of tasks, for instance all of the school's policies are now up to date. Governors visit the school regularly. However, although governors receive a considerable amount of information about pupils' learning and progress, this is not presented in an accessible way. Consequently, it is not always clear to governors where pupils' learning and progress are strongest and weakest.

The last inspection highlighted the need for teachers to explain each lesson's learning focus so pupils understand what they were about to learn. You have addressed this area well. Pupils can now talk knowledgeably about their learning, including during the new 'pupil-parent termly learning conversations'.

The previous inspection identified that the most able pupils were not given sufficiently challenging work. You have addressed this area effectively in reading. Current most-able pupils read well because you have helped them to develop a love of reading which extends across many types of books. However, you recognise that you need to provide more challenging work for this group in writing and mathematics. This will ensure that the most able, including those who are disadvantaged, reach the higher standards in all core subjects.

An area to improve, from the last inspection, was to raise pupils' achievement in writing and, in particular, to improve their handwriting. You have made sure that handwriting skills are now well developed. Pupils form letters correctly and most have legible handwriting. However, pupils do not always have the skills to write at length, particularly when writing in other subjects.

Safeguarding is effective.

Pupils are safe at your school because staff are dedicated to their well-being. Staff build strong and caring relationships with pupils. All who responded to the Ofsted staff questionnaire consider pupils to be safe in the school.

The leadership team has ensured that all safeguarding arrangements are fit for purpose. Staff have been well trained in all aspects of safeguarding and are alert to any potential issues. For example, staff know the signs and symptoms of neglect. They understand and follow the safeguarding procedures and know how external agencies can help.

Pupils who responded to Ofsted's questionnaire feel safe in school. They say there is always an adult they can talk to if they have any concerns or worries.

Inspection findings

- We agreed to look at the impact leaders' actions have had on the school since the last inspection. You are rightly proud of the improvements that have been made. You and your team have a clear understanding of the school's strengths and the areas to develop. By embedding a model of distributed leadership, you are ensuring that many staff are developing strong leadership skills.
- Another area of focus for this inspection was the attainment and progress of pupils. I found that pupils' progress was good across the school. In Reception, children do well. The proportion who gained a good level of development in 2018 was above the national average. Published information about outcomes for the last three years shows that pupils have made consistently strong progress in developing their reading, writing and mathematics skills. By the end of Year 6, pupils' attainment in these core subjects is similar to the national averages.
- In addition, I explored both the progress and attendance of disadvantaged pupils. Disadvantaged pupils do well because you target funding carefully to meet their specific needs. For example, when a pupil is identified as falling behind, they are given effective help to catch up. The current overall rate of attendance for disadvantaged pupils is similar to the national average.
- The final area I looked at was the impact of the curriculum on pupils' development. The curriculum is well planned and offers a range of experiences. Pupils learn several different languages, including Italian. The school offers many extra-curricular activities. Pupils say how much they enjoy their after-school sports and taking part in championship competitions, such as the Milton Keynes cross-country. They say how much they enjoy the 'specialist' weeks. One example being 'enterprise week', when pupils develop a good understanding of what is required to produce and sell a product. They also learn the importance of costings. As a result of their many different learning experiences, pupils are very well prepared for the next stage of their education.

Next steps for the school

Leaders and those responsible for governance should ensure that:

- governors are provided with clear information about how all pupils are progressing, including analysis of the progress of groups
- most-able pupils, including the disadvantaged most able, are suitably challenged so they work at the higher standards in writing and mathematics
- pupils develop their skills by practising writing at length in different subjects.

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

Yours sincerely

Liz Bowes
Ofsted Inspector

Information about the inspection

During this inspection, meetings were held with you, members of your senior leadership team and governors, including the newly appointed chair of the governing body. I had a meeting with the local authority's representative. I had discussions with a group of pupils and considered 29 responses to Ofsted's pupil survey. I spoke to some parents at the start of the school day and took into consideration 30 responses to the Ofsted online survey, Parent View, including 21 free-text comments. I took account of views expressed by 13 staff, responding to Ofsted's staff survey.

Together, we visited classes and looked at pupils' books. A range of the school's documentation was scrutinised, including: leaders' evaluation of the school's performance; plans for improvement; records of pupils' assessment and behaviour; the single central record of pre-employment checks; policies and procedures; and the most recent minutes of the governing body's meetings.