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1 April 2019

Mr Luke Bulpett
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Dear Mr Bulpett

Short inspection of Brightside Primary School

Following my visit to the school on 13 March 2019, 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 September 2014.

This school continues to be good.

The leadership team has maintained the good quality of education in the school since the previous inspection.

You and other leaders, ably supported by the governing body, have in the last 18 months improved the quality of education by strengthening the curriculum for a range of subjects. Pupils are better prepared for the next stage in their education by the end of Year 6. Leaders have also worked effectively to strengthen teaching, particularly at key stage 2, so that it is consistently better than it has been in the last few years. Pupils in key stage 1 and children in the early years make good progress and most reach the expected level of development because of the consistently good-quality teaching that they benefit from.

Governors have checked carefully on the rate of improvement and held you accountable for the increased progress being made by pupils in key stage 2. Consequently, pupils throughout the school receive a good-quality education. They demonstrate that they are knowledgeable about all aspects of the work of the school and are preparing thoroughly for the expansion of the school from September 2019.

Pupils behave very well in classrooms and around the school. Typically, they work hard, cooperate well with each other and really appreciate the opportunities that they are given to take responsibility for aspects of life in school.

A range of activities within lessons and outside the classroom, such as the clubs on offer, mean that pupils benefit from an enriched curriculum that adds enjoyment to

school life. The vast majority of the parents and pupils who responded to the online questionnaires appreciate the quality of education provided at the school.

At the previous inspection it was identified that pupils should make faster progress in mathematics and that the most able could do better. The school has taken effective steps to improve these aspects, but only in the last year has this become evident in the quality of work produced by pupils and the school information about progress. In science, pupils do not have enough opportunities to develop their investigation skills as well as they could.

Safeguarding is effective.

All the procedures and records for safer recruitment are secure and checked regularly to ensure that they are maintained to a high standard.

Staff all receive regular training and leaders and governors are rigorous in ensuring that before adults work in the school they have the necessary understanding of how to keep pupils safe. Currently, the number of staff who have the higher level 3 training for safeguarding is adequate. As the school expands next year, governors and leaders appreciate that more staff will need to be trained to ensure that coverage of this important aspect of safeguarding is secure.

Child protection procedures and relationships with outside agencies are secure. Pupils that are potentially vulnerable get good support from staff such as the help they receive from the family worker. One initiative that helps pupils to gain most from their time at school is the Bright Lights club at lunchtime, where pupils who have experienced difficult times in the playground can go for care and support.

Bullying is rare, but pupils can discuss how it may be manifested so that they know what to do should it occur. Pupils are also well prepared to keep themselves safe when playing games online or using their mobile phones. For example, they talk confidently about the steps that they would take should someone ask to be their friend when playing a game online.

Inspection findings

- In the past, the proportion of pupils who started key stage 2 with a greater depth of learning in writing and mathematics did not all do as well as they could by the end of Year 6. This was because they appeared to make slower progress than others. Historically there are two reasons for this. The previous Year 6 experienced poor teaching in some years during their time in key stage 2 and the assessment at the end of Year 2 in the past was not as accurate as it should have been. This has now been rectified.
- Currently more able pupils are producing work of a higher standard across the school because of improvements to teaching and learning. One strategy that is proving effective is the different levels of challenge pupils embark on in mathematics lessons that are developing problem-solving and reasoning skills very well. Another effective strategy is the bespoke approach to writing which is

producing very high-quality work by the time pupils are in Year 6.

- Each class has a relatively small number of disadvantaged pupils. Funding is used effectively to support them to learn, and the work in their books shows that while some find some aspects such as mathematics difficult, they are making good progress to overcome their misconceptions because of the support they receive from teachers and teaching assistants.
- Last year, the standards gained by pupils in writing and mathematics were broadly acceptable overall by the end of key stage 2, but the progress that they made from their starting points was significantly below average.
- Leaders have worked very effectively to strengthen the quality of teaching across the school and particularly in key stage 2. Initiatives such as peer mentoring and learning and bespoke programmes of support have ensured that the quality of teaching received by pupils across the school is much more consistently good. Assessment information supported by the work in books shows that this year, progress is much greater. However, the school has not had this improvement ratified by national assessment results.
- In September 2018, leaders introduced a revised curriculum for subjects other than reading, writing and mathematics across the school. One impressive feature is that all teachers consistently implemented these changes within their own classrooms so that pupils are benefiting from a progressive curriculum where new learning in most subjects is systematically based on prior learning.
- There is some high-quality work evident in subjects such as history, geography and the arts. For example, pupils demonstrate that as they become older they are proficient at map reading, and they are developing the sophisticated research skills necessary in history and drawing skills in art.
- In science, pupils do not get sufficient opportunity to develop their investigative skills because they do not carry out enough experiments to enable this. There are some good individual examples of experiments across the school, but these do not enable pupils to build on their knowledge and understanding systematically.
- Teachers assess pupils' learning in each subject, but the curriculum plan and work in books show that there are some gaps in time between the teaching of subjects. When these gaps occur, pupils can forget some of what they learned. Leaders have rightly identified that they must take steps to ensure that pupils retain the knowledge, understanding and skills that they have been taught so that they can be built upon when returning to the subject.

Next steps for the school

Leaders and those responsible for governance should ensure that:

- there are improvements to the science curriculum so that pupils become more proficient at carrying out investigations by the end of key stage 2
- teachers check carefully to ensure that pupils have retained the necessary knowledge and understanding required to embark on new learning.

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

Yours sincerely

Tim Bristow
Her Majesty's Inspector

Information about the inspection

During the inspection I visited classes across all years to talk to pupils, observe teaching, learning and the behaviour of pupils, and examine the work in books. A range of school documents including safeguarding records, assessment information and the school self-evaluation were examined. Meetings were held with you, the member of staff responsible for the administration of safeguarding records, some governors and three groups of pupils. I scrutinised the questionnaire responses from 128 parents, 44 staff and 161 pupils.