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8 April 2019

Dr Beth Clarke  
Headteacher  
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Dear Dr Clarke

### **Short inspection of Hill West Primary School**

Following my visit to the school on 27 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 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. 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 will be a section 5 inspection.

Leaders have addressed fully the areas for improvement raised at the last inspection. The school is a member of the Arthur Terry Learning Partnership, a multi-academy trust (MAT). Together with the local governing board and the trust, leaders have identified and tackled the comparative weaknesses in the school. Leaders have used relevant research effectively, for example to identify the best ways to revisit learning to make sure that pupils remember it in the long term. Over time, they have developed a distinctive and coherent approach to learning that is well understood by the school community.

Leaders' approach to the curriculum is at the heart of the school's success. They have specified in straightforward terms what pupils should achieve in every subject. In so doing, they have made sure that the knowledge and skills that pupils acquire during the course of an academic year build on those that they have learned previously. Crucially, both teachers and pupils understand these expectations well.

Leaders have also ensured that lessons fully engage pupils' interest. A question at the start of each topic arouses their curiosity and gives shape to the teaching. Trips, for example to the zoo, the pantomime or the First World War battlefields, further enhance the quality of pupils' learning. When leaders discovered that boys' progress in reading had fallen behind that of girls, teachers drew on more texts that appealed to boys.

Partly as a result of this engagement with the curriculum, pupils' attitudes to learning are excellent. From the early years onwards, they listen carefully and display commendable concentration. For example, during the inspection, key stage 1 pupils set about investigating and photographing the habitats of invertebrates with purpose and independence. Pupils collaborate well when asked to do so and volunteer extended verbal answers in class. They present their written work to a consistently high standard. Older pupils have a mature understanding of how well both the culture of the school and the teaching have prepared them for secondary school.

Leaders ensure that pupils understand and respect those from cultures and traditions other than their own. Pupils explained to me that the school did not tolerate discrimination. They said that being paired in class with different pupils had helped them to understand and respect their peers.

The school's records show that teaching across the school is highly effective, and inspection evidence confirmed this. Teachers consistently introduce pupils to demanding and stimulating ideas. For example, in a Year 5 history lesson about contenders to the English throne, pupils were expected to counter the drawbacks of their preferred claimant as well as identify their strengths. Teachers ask probing questions to encourage pupils to think more deeply and refine their initial answers. Learning is expertly paced.

In recent years, pupils' attainment across the school has been above the national average. In 2018, the proportion of pupils who left Year 6 having met the expected standard in reading, writing and mathematics was considerably higher than the national average. Published outcomes have shown that, in the last two years, key stage 2 pupils have made strong progress. Pupils' workbooks and the learning that I observed during the inspection showed that current pupils are also making consistently strong progress in a range of subjects, including English and mathematics.

An unusually high proportion of parents and carers responded to Parent View, Ofsted's online questionnaire. A very large majority expressed strong support for the school. Some parents I spoke with appreciated in particular the richness of the school's curriculum and the care for their children's individual needs.

### **Safeguarding is effective.**

The school has a very strong culture of safeguarding. Leaders have made sure that the staff are fully trained to identify any problems that pupils may face and are alert

to signs that they may not be safe. Staff exercise their responsibilities under the Prevent duty, although there have been no recent concerns about radicalisation or extremism. Records show that leaders regularly check on the safety of those pupils who are potentially vulnerable. They work effectively with parents and involve other agencies when required. Leaders persevere until they know that pupils' needs have been fully met. The trust checks that leaders fulfil all their obligations to keep children safe. All practical arrangements are fit for purpose.

Pupils told me that they feel entirely safe in the school. Those that I spoke with said that there was no bullying in the school and they had every confidence that an adult would be able to resolve any minor disagreement promptly. Pupils were able to recall in good detail the advice that they had received on how to stay safe online and on road safety. The school makes every effort to ensure that pupils leave able to swim.

### **Inspection findings**

- Leaders have established an excellent reading culture at the school. Wall displays promote the reading of challenging texts, and pupils have access to a well-stocked school library. Teachers introduce them to the public library too. The pupils that I spoke to all said that they enjoy reading. They said that the 15 minutes of private reading each morning made them keen to finish their books and so they read avidly at home. Leaders also use commercial software to promote reading at home. Teachers are fully aware of the different skills that make up reading and use this knowledge well to plan their classroom teaching.
- Teachers ensure that pupils have frequent opportunities to explain their mathematical thinking verbally, as well as in their books. They therefore learn how to take different approaches to solving problems. Teachers also help pupils to address any misconceptions, so that their understanding of how to answer a particular type of question is secure.
- Teachers' thought-provoking questions help to provide the most able pupils with a suitable level of challenge. During the inspection, I saw work of a very high standard in English, mathematics, history, geography and science. Published outcomes show that, in recent years, the most able key stage 2 pupils have made particularly strong progress.
- In our discussions and in your plans for improvement, you and your colleagues demonstrated a sharp and reliable understanding of what the school needs to do next. For example, you have identified steps to improve the progress of some pupils with middle-to-low prior attainment who had made less progress than their peers. Records show that the local governing board and the trust keep a thorough check on the quality of education and ask leaders searching questions about pupils' outcomes.
- Leaders' thoroughly planned approach to the curriculum ensures that pupils' learning is well balanced across all the national curriculum subjects. The pupils that I spoke with had especially enjoyed their studies in science, history, art and information technology. They had also taken advantage of a good range of after-school clubs and the opportunity to take part in competitive sport. Recently the

teaching of French and music has not been of the same consistently high quality as that of other subjects.

- The school is increasingly effective at overcoming disadvantaged pupils' barriers to learning. In 2017 and 2018, the proportion of disadvantaged children who attained a good level of development at the end of the Reception Year was below that of children nationally. At key stage 1 and key stage 2, disadvantaged pupils' attainment has generally been a little below that of their peers. However, the progress that disadvantaged pupils made at key stage 2 was stronger in 2018 than it had been in 2017. The school's achievement information and the work scrutiny showed that current pupils are generally making the same strong progress as their classmates.

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

Leaders and those responsible for governance should ensure that:

- teaching in French and music improves, so that it matches the consistently high quality of teaching in other subjects.

I am copying this letter to the chair of the board of trustees and the chief executive officer of the multi-academy trust, the regional schools commissioner and the director of children's services for Birmingham. This letter will be published on the Ofsted website.

Yours sincerely

Martin Spoor  
**Ofsted Inspector**

### **Information about the inspection**

During the inspection, I met with you, other leaders, members of the local governing board and representatives of the MAT. I also held informal conversations with other members of staff. I observed teaching jointly with senior leaders, including the teaching of English, mathematics, history and science. I scrutinised the work of some pupils in Years 2, 4 and 6 from the current academic year. I met with a group of pupils to gather their views and spoke informally with several more. I spoke with parents at the start of the school day. I observed pupils' behaviour at social times and when they moved around the school.

I took account of the 218 recent responses to Parent View, including comments made using the free-text service, and additional messages from parents. I also considered the 24 responses to Ofsted's staff questionnaire.

I scrutinised a wide range of documents, both electronically and on paper, including: the school's evaluation of its performance and its plans for improvement; records showing how the school monitors the quality of teaching; an external review of the

school conducted on behalf of the MAT; records of meetings held by the local governing board; policies; curriculum plans and records; and records of pupils' achievement, attendance and behaviour. I looked in detail at records that show how the school keeps pupils safe.