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Mr Graham Ball
Headteacher
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Dear Mr Ball

Short inspection of Barnfields Primary School

Following my visit to the school on 2 April 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 your predecessor school was judged to be good in May 2014.

This school continues to be good.

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

You and your deputy headteacher are both new in post, taking up your roles in September 2018. The school is a well-led and orderly place in which to work and learn. Senior leaders are organised and systematic in their approach to school management and school improvement and have introduced non-negotiable ways of working. Consequently, staff and pupils understand expectations, feel valued and know that they are expected to work hard to support one another. The roles of middle leaders are developing, although there is still a need to share the good practice that exists within the school with colleagues. Adults act as positive role models and pupils are treated fairly and taught to respect others.

Governors and trustees have high expectations and are fully involved in the strategic direction of the school. They use their skills and expertise to good effect and, as a result, are having a positive impact on areas of school improvement. Governors and trustees regularly analyse data about pupil outcomes and visit school to check the impact of leaders' work. They offer leaders appropriate support, but also challenge them by asking evaluative questions about aspects of school improvement. Governors work closely with designated leaders for safeguarding and fulfil their statutory responsibilities. They keep themselves well informed and up to date with training and check safeguarding procedures so that pupils are kept as safe as possible.

Most parents who responded to Ofsted's online questionnaire, Parent View, and those who spoke to me during the inspection expressed positive views about the school. They say that their children are safe, happy and well looked after. One comment summed up the views of many: 'Nurture is at the heart of the school enabling children to risk take, problem solve and become free-thinkers.'

Since taking up your post you have continued to act upon recommendations made at the previous inspection which were about improving the quality of feedback to pupils and focusing on improving pupils' skills in grammar and spelling. You are continuing to monitor the progress made by all groups of pupils.

Pupils dress smartly and are proud to wear their uniform. They speak highly of their teachers. In lessons they are focused, engaged and demonstrate positive attitudes to learning. At breaktimes, pupils participate in a range of activities, for example cycling around the school's cycle track or playing handball. Pupils are encouraged to stay fit and they say that their 'school dinners are healthy and tasty'. Pupils show care and consideration for others and have a detailed understanding of why you should be sensitive to the needs of others, particularly in relation to fellow pupils with autism.

Safeguarding is effective.

You have created a strong culture for safeguarding pupils. Necessary training and guidance have been provided to ensure that all staff have a clear understanding of their roles and responsibilities in protecting pupils from harm. High levels of vigilance and excellent relationships between staff and pupils ensure that any concerns are picked up and reported appropriately. The change to an electronic recording system has improved the tracking of concerns raised and the chronology of actions taken. Risk assessments are carried out to detect and avoid potential dangers during school activities. Safer recruitment checks are rigorous, and all adults are fully vetted to ensure that they are safe to work with children. The leadership team has ensured that all safeguarding arrangements are fit for purpose.

Pupils know how to keep themselves safe and are confident to tell an adult if they have a worry. Through the curriculum and assemblies, pupils learn about e-safety, know the different forms bullying can take and know how to stay safe when using roads in the locality, both as a pedestrian and when riding a bike or scooter.

Inspection findings

- In summer 2017, pupils by the end of key stage 2 made weak progress in reading. In response to this staff have completely overhauled the way reading is taught and the time given to teaching reading skills. Pupils now have daily reading lessons based on high-quality texts. The school now places a greater emphasis on recording reading activities in a dedicated exercise book so that the skills taught can be more carefully monitored by leaders. Writing activities are closely linked to the current class texts being studied. The range of texts is consistently being developed and extended. A new library has been opened,

which has further raised the profile of reading throughout the school. Pupils are able to select books correctly supported by an online programme which tests and monitors pupils' reading achievements. Published data and the school's own data show that these new initiatives are beginning to have an impact. However, further work is needed to embed these approaches across the school so that more pupils can make better progress in reading.

- A new approach to writing has recently been introduced across the school. Technical skills are specifically taught, and pupils have the opportunity to write at length. Although still too early to make a firm judgement, the signs are that this new approach is helpful. The school has worked closely with its trust partner school to develop writing moderation, where pupils' writing is compared across schools. This has resulted in clear expectations of what good writing looks like. The English lead has had a range of professional development opportunities to develop his own skills further. A new approach to spelling, which focuses on a pattern of the week that is rehearsed throughout lessons and applied in pupils' writing, has led to improved spelling and vocabulary choices in pupils' work. There are strong links with parents and they are well-informed on how they can support their child's learning in reading and writing through meetings and workshops, some of which are directed at grandparents. Many teachers have high expectations of what pupils can achieve. Examples of high-quality writing can be seen displayed around school. For example, just prior to the inspection, the school had focused on 'The Bear and the Piano' by David Lichfield, with Year 3 pupils being asked to write a diary entry by the bear, that articulated the bear's thinking about whether he should stay in the city or return to the forest. The writing project culminated in a parent playing the school's grand piano to the children.
- Leaders choose the school's curriculum with thought and care. Year 5 have been trialling a new approach to curriculum design with work being streamlined into one exercise book, with more meaningful links made within and across subjects. This creative curriculum has been designed to ensure that it is real, relevant and local, drawing upon the rich resources in Staffordshire. For example, strong links have been made with Shugborough Hall where the pupils have studied in depth the history of the Anson family and written poetry about the monuments in the estate's grounds. Planning builds on pupils' previous learning and extends their thinking through thought-provoking questions. This approach has not yet been implemented in other year groups and subjects. Pupils do, however, have the opportunity to take part in a range of wider and extra-curricular activities, with Year 4 learning to play the violin and Years 5 and 6 pupils having the opportunity to take part in an early dance class on a Friday.

Next steps for the school

Leaders and those responsible for governance should ensure that:

- the recently introduced approaches to the teaching of reading and writing are fully embedded across the school so that more pupils make better progress in reading and writing by the end of key stage 2

- the capacity of middle leaders is developed so that they build on and share good practice across the school
- further develop the creative curriculum so that teaching in all subjects builds upon previous learning.

I am copying this letter to the chair of the governing body, 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 Staffordshire. This letter will be published on the Ofsted website.

Yours sincerely

Heather Phillips
Her Majesty's Inspector

Information about the inspection

During the inspection, I met with you and other members of the leadership team. I also met with five governors and trustees and the school's bursar. I carried out short observations of teaching in different year groups and looked at pupils' work in books and on display. I talked with pupils in lessons and at breaktime and met with a small group to talk about school life and work. I spoke with parents at the end of the school day. I paid attention to several key lines of enquiry. These included the quality of reading and writing, safeguarding and the curriculum. By the end of the inspection I had taken into account 145 responses to Ofsted's online questionnaire, Parent View, and 145 written comments. I considered 34 responses to Ofsted's staff questionnaire. I looked at several documents, including the school's own evaluation of its performance, the school's improvement plan and governors' records. I also checked the school's website and the procedures for keeping pupils safe.