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Mrs Sophie Laing  
Executive Headteacher  
Freshwaters Primary Academy  
Freshwaters  
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Essex  
CM20 3QA

Dear Mrs Laing

### **Short inspection of Freshwaters Primary Academy**

Following my visit to the school on 19 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 April 2015.

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

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

Freshwater Primary Academy joined the Burnt Mill Academy Trust (BMAT) in September 2013. Over recent years there have been a number of changes in leadership and teaching staff. Through this turbulent time of staffing and recruitment you, supported by the trust, have successfully maintained the good standard of education and good progress achieved at the end of key stage 2, particularly in reading and mathematics.

In addition, there have been a significant number of pupils joining the school mid-year and across different year groups due to an increase in pupil places. Although key stage 1 attainment in reading, writing and mathematics in 2018 was disappointing, leaders' actions have secured positive outcomes for current pupils across the school.

Pupils are happy, sociable and enthusiastic learners. Adults too are enthusiastic and are proud to work at the school. Pupils are polite and respectful to adults and visitors. This is because adults serve as good role models and develop strong, positive relationships with pupils.

The school community's deeply held values are apparent in many aspects of its work. Displays in classrooms and corridors remind pupils that they can be what they want to be and to never give up. Pupils behave well in and out of lessons and

develop into resilient, reflective and aspirational individuals, as evidenced in their ambitions to become architects, accountants and engineers, among other worthy occupations. They take on additional responsibilities with pride and are keen to make a difference in their school community.

Pupils have a good understanding about diversity and shared their learning about different religions. Members of the school council spoke passionately about how everyone is equal.

You have made good progress in addressing the areas for improvement suggested in the previous report. Your restructuring of the nursery's curriculum and physical environment has ensured that children have frequent opportunities to develop their skills in a range of activities, including reading, writing and mathematics. Across the two key stages there is a clear consistency in expectation of teaching and learning in reading, writing and mathematics, particularly in terms of feedback to pupils and giving pupils' next steps in their learning. Your leader for pupils with special educational needs and/or disabilities (SEND) is highly committed to getting the right support and training for staff and ensuring that support is well matched to the needs of these pupils. Pupils who are vulnerable and sometimes find parts of the school day challenging are given effective strategies to help them manage their behaviour. Your training for key staff, such as learning mentors, has been pivotal in helping pupils successfully reflect on their behaviours and prepare better for their learning.

Your commitment to developing and empowering all staff has been instrumental in ensuring that, despite the recent instability, pupils who have fallen behind in reading, writing and mathematics are now making very good progress and catching up. Thoughtful restructuring of adults' responsibilities and deployment of staff have raised morale as they rightly see themselves as making a difference to pupils' well-being and outcomes. Subject leaders are extremely well supported by the trust's directors of English and mathematics and this is having a positive impact on raising attainment for current pupils.

Parents spoken to were very supportive of the work of school leaders and its impact on pupils' progress. However, some comments from parents on Ofsted's free-text service reflect parents' frustration with the many changes in school staff and leadership.

### **Safeguarding is effective.**

Leaders, staff and governors have ensured that safeguarding pupils is afforded the highest priority and safeguarding processes are fit for purpose.

Leaders' systems for recording concerns about pupils are watertight and highly effective. Checks are in place to ensure that all concerns are picked up and are passed on to designated leaders swiftly. Evidence shows that leaders follow up concerns promptly and appropriate action is taken. Systems in place for recording behaviour are very effective and enable leaders and teachers to easily analyse

information and identify patterns or trends in pupils' behaviour. This has proved extremely useful, for example, in highlighting where support is needed for some pupils who present challenging behaviour, so that relevant training for teachers can be put in place and consequently reduce the number of incidents.

Pupils know about the different forms of bullying and spoke about one-off incidents of inappropriate behaviour. They said that they are confident that staff will deal with their concerns quickly and appropriately. Leaders take appropriate actions promptly when there are concerns about bullying. Pupils were excited to be given the role of anti-bullying ambassadors and are currently being trained for this new role. Pupils are taught how to stay safe when using the internet and know an adult that they could talk to if they are worried. Pupils spoke of the 'worry box' in class where they can post concerns. They also spoke of the safeguarding team, made up of four adults whom they trust to help them deal with their concerns. Just over a quarter of parents completed Ofsted's online questionnaire, Parent View, and of those, almost all say that their children are happy, safe and well looked after.

Leaders ensure that employee files are meticulously maintained. Office staff are diligent and leaders, including governors, monitor safeguarding records routinely to ensure that checks on all employees' and visitors' suitability to work with children are carried out and recorded appropriately.

### **Inspection findings**

- Attainment for pupils at the end of Year 2 in 2018 was significantly below pupils nationally and had declined from the previous year. You were able to explain this and provide evidence for the reasons for the low attainment. You were also able to demonstrate the impact of the actions you had taken to support pupils in Year 3 to catch up, particularly in writing and mathematics, and also to strengthen the quality of teaching and learning in key stage 1.
- Due to your incisive actions, most Year 3 pupils are now making good progress in reading, writing and mathematics, as evidenced in pupils' work and your precise monitoring of pupils' progress.
- Pupils' attainment in writing at the end of both key stages was below reading and mathematics at the expected and greater depth levels. There is a strong focus of teachers on improving pupils' speaking and listening skills and broadening pupils' vocabulary. Evidence shows that pupils are taught grammar skills effectively and that they write for a range of purposes. However, in both key stages, pupils are not given enough opportunities to apply these skills to longer writing tasks to show what they can do independently.
- In mathematics, there is strong evidence to demonstrate that pupils in Year 1 are encouraged to justify their answers through a range of mathematical reasoning tasks. In lessons, there was an expectation for pupils in Year 1 to start their sentences with 'Yes, because' or 'No, because'. They are beginning to do this confidently and attempting more complex tasks with increasing confidence. However, this is still a priority for the school so that more pupils have the opportunity to reach the higher standards of attainment in both key stages 1 and

2.

- A high proportion of children enter Nursery and Reception with skills lower than those typical for their age. This is particularly the case for communication and language skills and in writing. Your focus on developing the nursery provision has been a huge success in supporting children to catch up. You have ensured that children get a strong start to their education. Evidence of leaders' strong focus towards developing children's vocabulary in a hugely inspiring environment, both indoors and out, was clear to see.
- Adults are highly skilled at probing children with questioning to encourage them to think deeper about their learning. Children were observed actively engaged in purposeful activities to develop a range of skills. The focus on language and talk and fine motor skills has helped children develop the confidence to start writing.
- This improvement in their confidence has led to an increase in the number of children achieving a good level of development in Reception in 2018. Reception children are prepared well to write by recalling events, for example, about their trip to a local animal centre. Children were clearly inspired and were eager to share their experiences with the teacher. However, the Reception classes do not reflect the high level of provision seen in the nursery, particularly in terms of the environment. Leaders have secure plans in place to develop the Reception provision so that it at least matches the high quality in the nursery.
- Pupils who are disadvantaged make progress in reading that is above other pupils nationally, and broadly in line in writing and mathematics, by the time they leave the school. In 2018, disadvantaged pupils at the end of key stage 1 did not attain well when compared with others nationally.
- Your leader for SEND has successfully identified where there are gaps in pupils' learning and where pupils have additional needs. In addition, she has also identified the training that the SEND assistants and teachers require to ensure that all pupils, including those who are disadvantaged, get the right support. She works very effectively alongside teachers and checks the effectiveness of the small group support. Teachers demonstrated that they are acutely aware of pupils' barriers for learning. They plan specific activities that consider pupils' needs well and take into account where they are in their learning. Yours and other leaders' rigorous monitoring of pupils' progress, coupled with high-quality training for all staff, has ensured that current disadvantaged pupils are very well supported so that most make good progress in all year groups.

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

Leaders and those responsible for governance should ensure that:

- teachers provide more opportunities for pupils to practise their skills in writing in tasks that require them to write at length
- teachers further develop pupils' reasoning and problem-solving skills so that more pupils reach the higher standards of attainment in mathematics
- the indoor and outdoor provision in Reception gives children the same high-quality experiences as the nursery provision.

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

Yours sincerely

Cindy Impey  
**Her Majesty's Inspector**

**Information about the inspection**

During the inspection, I visited all year groups, along with you, to observe teaching and learning and the behaviour of pupils. I examined work in books and spoke with pupils about their learning. I examined a range of documentation, including safeguarding records, information about pupils' progress and school development plans.

Meetings were held with you, senior leaders, teachers, and four members of the local governing body, including the chair of governors. I also spoke with the 12 members of the school council and five members of staff. I considered 59 responses to Ofsted's online questionnaire, Parent View, and 49 responses to Ofsted's parents' free-text facility.