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Ms Helen Rudeforth  
Headteacher  
James Watt Primary School  
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Birmingham  
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Dear Ms Rudeforth

### **Short inspection of James Watt Primary School**

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 February 2015.

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

The leadership team has maintained the good quality of education in the school since the last inspection. Your senior leadership team is working successfully to continue to improve outcomes for pupils. You have successfully built a leadership team which gives pupils every chance to be successful in their learning. Because of this, standards are rising. For example, pupils' attainment, by the end of Year 6, has increased year on year for the past three years in mathematics.

Senior leaders keep a very close eye on the quality of teaching including by checking regularly on how well pupils are learning. Through this robust monitoring, they identify what needs to be improved. Teachers then act swiftly on advice from senior leaders to enhance their teaching. This is how leaders have successfully improved pupils' achievement in writing since the previous inspection.

Leaders plan thoroughly for improvement in pupils' achievement. Plans are well rooted in leaders' secure knowledge of the strengths and weaknesses of the school. They are clear and carefully sequenced to help further improve learning.

You are very conscious of considering staff well-being and workload to ensure that they are not overburdened. Staff appreciate this support greatly and a number highlighted this in the staff questionnaire. They commented positively on the working group which you established to focus on managing workload more effectively.

Governors add an extra dimension to giving the school strategic direction. They are very well informed about what is going well at school and have a secure understanding of what needs to be done to bring about further improvement. Governors are drawing on their wide range of skills and expertise to provide a good level of challenge and support and help your school improve further. Governors recognise the drive of the leadership team as it strives to maximise improvements in pupils' achievement. They see this, rightly, as a key strength.

A thirst for the highest standards for all is well embedded in school life. This is because you believe your pupils are capable of reaching these standards in all subjects. This is an approach which you have promoted effectively across school. All staff adopt this as their mantra because of the belief you have built.

Pupils are exceptionally polite and well mannered on the playground and in lessons. Good behaviour in lessons has a positive impact on learning. Pupils are keen and enthusiastic learners.

The governing body is made up of talented individuals who bring a wide range of important skills to the group. They can draw on a wide range of expertise to help improve the school further.

### **Safeguarding is effective.**

Leaders have established a highly successful culture of safeguarding which permeates school life. They use a streamlined system successfully to record employment checks before staff can work at your school. This is checked by your link safeguarding governor to ensure that it complies with legal requirements.

Staff understand who they should report any concerns to, whether they are about pupils, staff or even the headteacher. Designated safeguarding leaders diligently deal with a complex workload. They are prepared to go the extra mile to ensure that pupils are kept safe. Staff work effectively with a wide range of outside agencies to ensure that pupils are kept safe. Safeguarding training is up to date and, as updates are received, they are shared rapidly with staff. The leadership team has ensured that all safeguarding arrangements are fit for purpose.

### **Inspection findings**

- Since you identified pupils' achievement in reading as an area of concern, you and your leadership team have worked diligently with Birmingham Education Partnership (BEP) to transform your school into one where reading is seen as the key to learning. Pupils speak eloquently about their love of literature and their favourite authors. For example, they say that they enjoy reading the Dork Diaries by Rachel Renée Russell, Harry Potter books and fiction written by Jacqueline Wilson. Around the school, displays promote the enjoyment of reading. The display about finding fairy-tale characters exemplifies this well.
- The adopted approach to improving pupils' reading and comprehension skills is

helping pupils achieve higher standards. In reading lessons, teachers question pupils carefully to identify gaps in their understanding. They then explain the meaning of words and extend pupils' knowledge.

- Nevertheless, the work you have carried out to change the culture of reading and how it is taught is not completely embedded. It is too early to see the full impact on pupils' achievement. Pupils' progress across key stage 2 was significantly above the national average in writing last year. Their progress in reading lagged somewhat behind this.
- Pupils' books show that teachers have high expectations of them. Many books are exceptionally well presented. Pupils show pride in producing work of a high standard. Displays of pupils' work around school celebrate their success. High-quality writing displays include work which is neat, with the correct punctuation and contains no grammatical errors.
- Teachers' plans show that they intend for pupils to apply their writing skills across a wide range of subjects. However, pupils' books show that this does not happen in practice in some classes.
- Children make fast progress in their learning when they join the Nursery because they are taught by skilled practitioners. Children who speak English as an additional language are exceptionally well supported by your Nursery team. Your skilled staff get them off to a good start to their education by ensuring that the classroom and outdoor areas are rich in spoken and written language. This helps to improve children's knowledge of words and their meanings. Recent improvements in the Nursery and the early years are successful in helping children to become more confident and independent learners.
- The early years curriculum provides many additional experiences for children, beyond what they are used to locally. This helps build their skills for life and helps them to make good progress. The proportion of children who reach a good level of development at the end of the early years is improving year on year. Nevertheless, it is still below average.
- Pupils who speak English as an additional language and pupils with special educational needs and/or disabilities (SEND) are well supported in their learning by skilled teachers and teaching assistants. Well-tailored programmes of support enable pupils who speak English as an additional language to be successful in their learning and make strong progress. The leadership of SEND provision is highly effective. The SENCo has a tight grip on how well pupils are progressing and how well interventions are helping pupils with SEND to make good progress.
- Disadvantaged pupils and those from middle-prior-attaining starting points are now making good progress in their learning.

## **Next steps for the school**

Leaders and those responsible for governance should ensure that:

- improvements made to the teaching of reading become embedded to further enhance pupils' progress in reading across key stage 2
- improvements in the early years are built on to further increase the proportion of children leaving the Reception Year having reached a good level of development
- the planned curriculum is delivered consistently well in all year groups.

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

Yours sincerely

Declan McCauley

**Ofsted Inspector**

### **Information about the inspection**

During the inspection, I met with you and the teaching staff. I also spoke with the chair of the governing body, pupils and parents. I carried out joint learning walks with both of your deputy headteachers. This included looking at the work in pupils' books and speaking to pupils about their work.

I analysed seven responses to Parent View, the Ofsted online questionnaire, and seven written comments. I considered the 19 responses to Ofsted's staff questionnaire. I also considered your analysis of the school's parental satisfaction survey conducted during the autumn term in 2018, when nearly three quarters of the school community responded. I also talked with several pupils and many parents about their experiences of school life.

I scrutinised documents including the school's own evaluation of its performance, information about the work of the governing body, pupils' progress information, improvement plans and records of local authority checks on the quality of teaching and learning. I also checked the school's website and the procedures for keeping pupils safe.