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Mrs Mo Duffy
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Dear Mrs Duffy

Short inspection of Blenheim Primary School

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

Following the last inspection, leaders were asked to respond more quickly to pupils' learning so that work is adapted promptly within lessons and continues to challenge all pupils, particularly the most able. You were also asked to make the best of every opportunity to develop pupils' language skills, to provide more opportunities for writing at length across the curriculum, and to encourage all pupils to present their work neatly and carefully. To your credit, these aspects have been tackled successfully. Indeed, over the past three years, the school has built an enviable track record of academic improvement, particularly at the end of key stage 2, which has led the local authority and local schools to seek your counsel and support.

Your leadership and that of your deputy headteacher has been highly effective and you are both ably supported by a very capable team of senior leaders and expert teaching and support staff. Clear direction and cultivating a collective responsibility and shared ambition among staff and pupils have created a culture of success and ambition. Your strategy, and not surprisingly your school motto, has been simple: 'Aiming High in the Heart of the City'. This underpins every decision you have made and this ambition for all pupils, families and staff who work at Blenheim Primary is

evident. The vehicles for this are high-quality teaching, an engaging and rich curriculum and excellent levels of care, guidance and support, which promote pupils' personal development very well.

You and your team have fostered a caring, inclusive and welcoming atmosphere in the school. Most pupils' behaviour is impeccable and they are a credit to their families. Pupils love coming to school and they and their families value the effort staff put into helping them develop as individuals and learn lots of new things. Pupils know they are doing well because of the regular feedback staff provide and their ever-increasing knowledge, skills and understanding. One child said that 'the best thing about the school is the challenge the teachers give me with my lessons, which makes me learn even more'.

Pupils and staff relationships are strong. Parents and carers value immensely the school's caring ethos and appreciate the school's tireless work on behalf of their children. They welcome the guidance you offer and the time staff invest to help them better support their children's learning and development. The school really goes the extra mile to ensure that pupils receive a high-quality education. None of this would be possible without your talented and dedicated staff, who embody the school's core moral purpose of working to ensure that every child aims high to reach their potential, regardless of any barriers to success that may exist.

Your evaluation of the school's current effectiveness is precise. You have taken highly effective actions to address aspects that were less than good. 'We never let the grass grow under our feet', was a phrase used many times by leaders, including governors, in discussions held and this is evident in the work undertaken. You are not complacent and you recognise that there is room for improvement in developing the self-regulation skills of a very small minority of pupils, particularly younger boys, in less-structured school times. You also accept that there is scope for your already rich curriculum to be enhanced further to ensure the highest possible outcomes in all curriculum areas. Indeed, you already have clear plans in place to address this.

Collectively, governors have the necessary skills and expertise to monitor and evaluate rigorously the effectiveness of school leadership and the school's performance. They are passionate and rightly proud of the school, as well as being astute in their evaluation of the school. They discharge their duties diligently. They know the school well and are committed to, and ambitious for, the school. They have produced a clear action plan with the onus on strategically supporting and challenging the school's ongoing development.

As a consequence of the school's success, the local authority has only needed to offer light-touch support; indeed your school is viewed as a real strength in the city. Collaborative work undertaken has centred on some bespoke review and moderation activities around writing following the 2018 results. You are keen to continue the work with other local partners in supporting middle leadership development, something which the governors also value.

Safeguarding is effective.

You and your team ensure that the school's safeguarding arrangements are fit for purpose. Records are comprehensive, of a high quality and fastidiously maintained. Thorough checks are undertaken to ensure that all staff are safe to work with children. Your safeguarding team has worked effectively to embed a culture of vigilance among all staff.

Records show that you regularly provide staff with safeguarding training and updates and you check staff understanding through regular questions. This ensures that staff are aware of and can apply the latest guidance and thinking in their daily work. Among other things, you have ensured that staff have a good understanding of the 'Prevent' duty and can recognise the potential signs of child abuse, neglect or sexual exploitation. Staff spoken to were very clear about the exact action they need to take.

You have robust systems to record concerns about pupils and make referrals to the appropriate authority, should it be necessary. As a school, you have forged effective links with external agencies and partners, which support the work you do to keep pupils safe. Positive feedback from parents and pupils endorses the current effectiveness of your strategy to keep children safe and free from harm. Pupils told me that they feel safe in school. They are aware of different forms of bullying and the harm it can cause but do not think it is a problem in the school. They know there are risks and dangers they might face online and in other situations but are confident they know how to stay safe, partly as a result of what you and visitors to the school have taught them. Pupils are confident that if they need help or guidance any member of staff would support them.

Inspection findings

- There is substantial evidence that since the last inspection pupils' attainment and progress have risen sharply. The proportion of children reaching a good level of development at the end of the early years has increased year on year and in 2018 was in line with the national average. Year 1 phonics screening check scores have improved from below average to average. At the end of key stage 1 in 2018, the proportion of pupils working at the expected standard in reading, writing and mathematics was line with the national average. The proportion reaching the higher standard has moved from below to above average in mathematics and reading. The icing on the cake, however, is the considerably higher than average progress scores for pupils in reading, mathematics and English grammar, punctuation and spelling by the end of key stage 2 in 2018. This was mirrored for disadvantaged pupils in reading and mathematics in 2018. In writing, while progress was average in 2018 it took a slight dip from 2017. Consequently, you took immediate action and inspection evidence of current pupils' progress indicates that this dip has been addressed. In Year 6 in 2018, the proportion of pupils attaining the expected standard in reading, writing and mathematics combined was substantially above average in 2018. This is all the more remarkable given the typical starting point of the majority of pupils, which

is below expected levels on entry to the school, as well as the highly mobile pupil community you have, some of whom are only with you for very short periods of time.

- I saw features of exceptional teaching. This was characterised by the high expectations staff had of what pupils could achieve, vibrant and engaging learning climates and environments and expert teaching, which motivated pupils, stimulating their curiosity and creativity. Highly effective questioning and probing which led to progressively challenging activities, accompanied by excellent support and guidance, gave pupils the confidence to really push themselves and excel. This culminated in significant gains in their knowledge, skills and understanding. My discussion with pupils, scrutiny of their work and evaluation of your assessment information confirm that this is typical of the experience current pupils receive.
- Your support for disadvantaged pupils and those pupils with special educational needs and/or disabilities (SEND) is highly effective; it allows them to make rapid progress. The case studies of pupils who started school unable to speak English and who are now reaching high standards; pupils who have complex needs and troubled pupils transferred from other schools, who are now thriving in the nurturing environment you have created, are inspiring. It is little wonder your school is significantly oversubscribed.
- The very effective development of children in Nursery and Reception, from their starting points, is the foundation stone of the very strong progress pupils go on to achieve by the end of Year 6. This should not be underestimated. Children benefit from excellent teaching, a language-rich curriculum and exceptional care, guidance and support. Leadership of early years has proved highly effective in ensuring that the priorities are the right ones to ensure the very best outcomes for the children.
- Pupils enjoy the curriculum and relish the opportunities you provide them with to immerse themselves in their learning. They highlighted an under the water project, Australia, mathematics, and studying the Second World War as some of their favourite learning. They talked animatedly about the many trips and visitors into school you offer. Indeed, evidence of this was seen on the day of the inspection with the forensic science work pupils were engrossed in. Pupils are confident, fluent readers. Through your focus since the last inspection on developing early reading and language, pupils have a broad vocabulary, good comprehension skills and good phonics awareness. Your curriculum also prepares pupils very well for living in multi-cultural Britain.
- We agreed that increasing the proportion of children who exceed expectations by the end of the early years and further raising the proportion of pupils attaining the higher standards at the end of key stages 1 and 2 would add further credibility to the school's assertions that it is an outstanding provider of education.
- The overall rate of attendance has improved from below average to above average since the previous inspection. Persistent absence rates are now below average. Although attendance is improving, you are relentless in the actions you take to improve attendance and reduce persistent absence. You recognise that

there are still improvements that could be made in the attendance and persistent absence of some pupils who take extended holidays during term time.

Next steps for the school

Leaders and those responsible for governance should ensure that:

- you implement your plans to refine and clarify the aims and ambition you have for the wider curriculum, ensuring that the intended outcomes, especially for those pupils who are capable of reaching higher levels, are realised
- you build on the expertise and skills of the governing body, including new governors, through providing high-quality training which enables all to deliver on the action plans in place; this will ensure that governors maintain their focus on continued improvement to meet the high expectations and ambition they have for the school
- for a very small number of pupils, they are supported in acquiring the necessary skills to be able to self-regulate their behaviour at less structured times, to match the impeccable standards seen at all other times.

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

Yours sincerely

Nicola Shipman
Ofsted Inspector

Information about the inspection

I visited 10 classes during this short inspection. I was accompanied in all of these visits. During the visits, I observed learning and, where appropriate, I spoke with pupils about their work and attitudes to school. I looked at a wide range of pupils' books and folders and children's learning journals to judge their progress and the quality of their presentation.

During the day, I spoke with you, the deputy headteacher and the early years leader. Discussions were also held with three governors, one of whom was the chair of the governing body. I also met with an officer from Leeds local authority, who has been monitoring the work of the school. I also met with a group of staff. I observed and spoke informally with pupils during the day and at lunchtime to discuss their attitudes to learning and their views of the school. I observed two Year 6 lessons. I also listened to, and discussed, reading with four pupils from Years 1, 3 and 6.

I took into account six free-text responses from parents and the views of the 110

parents who responded to Ofsted's online facility, Parent View. I also took into account 39 views from the online staff survey and 102 from the online pupil survey. I scrutinised a wide range of documents about the school's safeguarding systems, the quality and effect of staff training, governors' work and the minutes of their actions and checks you make on the quality and effect of teaching.