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19 July 2019

Mrs Laura Snowdon  
Headteacher  
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Dear Mrs Snowdon

### **Short inspection of Bournmoor Primary School**

Following my visit to the school on 10 July 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. As headteacher, you lead the school well, with drive and determination to do what is right for the pupils and community of Bournmoor. The quality of education that pupils receive is strong and improving.

Pupils enjoy coming to school. Rates of attendance are high and persistent absence is low. Staff know the pupils and their families extremely well. Consequently, communication between home and school is excellent. Staff are kept in the loop regularly regarding issues a pupil may be experiencing outside of school. The caring and considerate approach adopted by all staff ensures that pupils' pastoral needs are met very well. Pupils who are absent from school are chased-up swiftly by staff. Checks are made to ensure that pupils are on the road to recovery, or the parent support adviser may visit a family to discuss issues that may be acting as a barrier to attendance. Leaders have an appropriate awareness of the steps to take, and referrals to be made, when a pupil stops attending school for a longer period of time. This, and the diligent approach to all attendance matters by staff, ensures that pupils are cared for well.

You and your staff place a significant emphasis on developing pupils' knowledge, skills and understanding in relation to science, technology, engineering and mathematics (STEM). Leaders have established links with local businesses such as Nissan, in Sunderland, and Komatsu, in Birtley. This complements the strong STEM curriculum successfully, ensuring that pupils make the link between their own

learning in school and the world of work. The school's motto of, 'I do and I understand' is a prominent feature throughout the school. Staff regularly encourage pupils to do just that. For example, pupils' understanding of STEM is supplemented annually when they build an electric car which, rightly, takes centre stage in the assembly hall.

At the previous inspection, leaders were asked to improve the quality of teaching further. You have been successful in this regard. Typically, teachers know their pupils well. This is because teachers use assessment incisively to strengthen their own understanding of what pupils know and can do. Pupils are provided with frequent opportunities to reflect on their learning. Pupils are unafraid to ask questions of teachers to clarify or boost their understanding. Over time, pupils' attainment in the mathematics and writing assessments at the end of key stage 2 has been above the national average. Between 2016 and 2018, pupils' outcomes in reading, writing and mathematics at the end of key stage 1 were also above the national average. Pupils' attainment in reading at the end of key stage 2 has not been as strong as attainment in other subjects. Consequently, this was a significant focus during this inspection.

Leaders were also asked to further improve the quality of leadership and management by enabling those new to leadership to develop their roles further. You and your staff are outward-facing. Consequently, you sought additional support from the local authority to provide training and guidance to new leaders. Furthermore, the strong links that you have established with other schools ensures that leaders across the school can call upon a network of colleagues to share resources, moderate pupils' work and cast a fresh pair of eyes over documentation linked to school improvement planning. Subject leaders are passionate and demonstrate a strong understanding of provision in the subjects they are responsible for.

### **Safeguarding is effective.**

The leadership team has ensured that all safeguarding arrangements are fit for purpose. Leaders with responsibility for safeguarding ensure that staff receive regular training in respect of the protection and care of pupils. Staff understand their responsibilities well in this regard. This includes lunchtime supervisors who receive specific training in first-aid, safe play and behaviour management. Lunchtimes are well-supervised and pupils play happily and sensibly together, making effective use of the many sporting resources and play apparatus.

Leaders make appropriate pre-recruitment checks to ensure that staff are safe to work with pupils.

Staff ensure that positive behaviour is promoted consistently. Pupils respond well to this approach. For example, pupils value the opportunity to move their name peg up the classroom reward chart when their teacher recognises and rewards pupils' positive attitudes to learning. The school's own records and published information demonstrate that no pupils have been permanently excluded in recent years and

that the number of pupils who are excluded for a fixed period is very low.

Pupils say that they feel safe. They have a strong understanding of the risks that they may face when using the internet and how they can reduce these risks by not sharing passwords or their personal details with a stranger. Pupils can recall a wide range of visitors and activities that they have been involved in that improve their understanding of danger and how to remain safe. For example, pupils particularly enjoyed visits from the police, fire brigade and other external speakers who helped pupils understand better the dangers of speaking to strangers.

## **Inspection findings**

- Leaders' self-evaluation and analysis of pupils' outcomes over time accurately highlight that key stage 2 pupils' attainment in reading is not as strong as it is in writing and mathematics. Consequently, you have ensured that improving pupils' reading skills is a high priority across the school. Staff promote reading frequently, both in lessons and through additional 'one-off' events. For example, pupils take part in Shakespeare week, reviewing and interpreting the story of 'Gnomeo and Juliet', the children's version of Romeo and Juliet. Furthermore, the 'book bus' and children's authors visit the school. Teachers and other staff listen to pupils read often. Similarly, pupils learn to imitate their teacher's reading skills by listening to the teacher read class novels or extended writing on a daily basis. Leaders described the importance of this to me during the inspection, explaining that, in this way, pupils learn essential reading skills via 'osmosis'. The vibrant school environment is effectively supplemented by a wide range of reading materials. Recent investment in the school library ensures that pupils have a wider choice of reading books now. Additionally, across the school, pupils' writing is celebrated. Most pupils that made their views known to me during the inspection enjoy reading. They particularly enjoy reading adventure stories and non-fiction books relating to nature. A very small minority of pupils say that they sometimes lose focus when reading for too long or that they pay more attention to the pictures in the books if the books do not interest them.
- Children in the early years get off to a flying-start. Strong teaching in Nursery and Reception ensures that staff swiftly develop children's early reading skills. The proportion of children reaching a good level of development by the end of Reception is consistently above the national average. Pupils in key stage 1 generally build on the strong start they make in the early years. For example, in 2018 every pupil met the expected standard in the phonics screening check. This represents strong progress because approximately four in every five pupils in this cohort reached a good level of development in Reception previously. Nevertheless, while there are many opportunities for children to develop their literacy skills, some of the activities are not sufficiently focused on developing children's writing and understanding of letter formation and they do not ensure that children can distinguish between the different marks they make.
- Inspection evidence demonstrates that staff endeavour to provide pupils with books to read at home and in school that match their phonic development. Although staff have completed an audit of the school library to ensure that the reading books, from a range of different publishers, correspond to each stage of

the school's phonics scheme this has not been entirely successful. Occasionally, pupils are given books that are too difficult for them to read. This does little to develop pupils' reading fluency or a love of reading over time because pupils struggle to decode and blend words accurately.

- Teachers are quite successful in planning lessons that meet the varying needs of pupils. In most classes, pupils' starting points differ considerably, particularly in classes containing two different year groups. Highly effective teaching assistants ensure that they support a large proportion of less-able pupils to do well. Pupils respond successfully to sharp questioning from staff and they appreciate the one-to-one guidance they receive. Occasionally, the significant variation in pupils' abilities leads to learning activities being either too difficult for some pupils or too easy for others. When this occurs, pupils are sometimes asked to write persuasively, identify adjectives or use their inference skills when reading. However, for some less-able pupils particularly, this is a step too far. These pupils have not yet mastered some of the basic reading skills they need; this prevents pupils from completing more-complex learning activities successfully.
- The weakest readers receive a wide range of support and intervention to improve their basic reading skills. Pupils benefit from additional time to read with, and to, an adult during assemblies and lunchtimes. During this time, staff focus on pupils' phonic development, ensuring that pupils have more opportunities to practise and use their knowledge of letters and the sounds they make. This ensures that the weakest readers are able to stay in touch with their learning, in English and across a wider range of subjects. Currently, leaders know that additional interventions are having a positive effect on the least able and most able pupils' knowledge, skills and understanding because outcomes are improving. They are less sure about which strategies are the most successful and why.
- Leaders ensure that staff have regular opportunities to improve their own understanding of how pupils learn to read. All staff are trained to teach phonics. This ensures that the pupils in key stage 2 who need further support with their reading continue to benefit from expert teaching as they move up through the school.
- Governance is strong. Governors possess a wide range of skills which they audit on an annual basis. This ensures that training can be organised or governor recruitment amended should they identify a particular skills deficit. Scrutiny of the minutes from governing body meetings highlights that governors challenge leaders frequently and that they do not accept the information they are presented with readily.
- Staff morale is high. The staff who responded to Ofsted's online staff survey say that they feel valued and respected. Staff say that they feel confident and supported by leaders to take risks and be innovative in the classroom. All staff say that the school has improved since the previous inspection and that their work-life balance is taken seriously by leaders.

## **Next steps for the school**

Leaders and governors should ensure that they:

- provide pupils with books to read, both in school and at home, that are closely matched to their phonic knowledge
- provide focused opportunities for children in the early years to practise their writing and letter formation
- understand which reading strategies are the most effective at helping the weakest readers catch up
- develop further teachers' ability to plan learning activities that meet the needs of pupils from their different starting points, particularly the most able and least able pupils.

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

Yours sincerely

Lee Elliott  
**Her Majesty's Inspector**

### **Information about the inspection**

During this one-day inspection, I met with you and other members of the leadership team. Together, we visited classrooms to evaluate pupils' learning. I met with the chair of the governing body, a representative from the local authority and the subject leader for literacy and a number of pupils. I spoke in person with a number of parents prior to the start of the school day. I observed staff listening to pupils read and visited the early years setting to speak with leaders and observe children's learning. Prior to the inspection, I analysed the school's website and evaluated a wide range of additional documentation. During the inspection, I evaluated safeguarding arrangements, including the record of suitability checks on staff, safeguarding policies and associated files, referrals and attendance records. I also scrutinised pupils' writing and reading books with a subject leader. I considered the 25 responses from parents to Parent View, Ofsted's online questionnaire, the 47 responses to Ofsted's online pupil survey and the 13 responses to Ofsted's online staff survey.