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10 October 2017

Mrs Amy Holmes  
Headteacher  
Brandwood Primary School  
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Dear Mrs Holmes

### **Short inspection of Brandwood Primary School**

Following my visit to the school on 26 September 2017, 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 November 2013.

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

The leadership team has maintained the good quality of education in the school since the last inspection. Since your appointment to headteacher of Brandwood Primary School, you have worked hard with staff and governors to improve teaching and learning. As a result, pupils make strong progress by the end of key stage 2 and they are well prepared for secondary education.

You are a strong leader who has developed a culture of high aspirations. You are dedicated to the community you serve and are relentless in your quest to improve standards in the school. You have a clear vision for the school and want pupils to believe that there are no limits to their ambitions. Your evaluation of the school is honest and self-reflective. You know the school's strengths and areas which need to be developed further. You track the progress of every pupil very carefully.

Staff are proud to work in the school and feel valued. They welcome your challenge and coaching to improve their skills. One teacher commented, 'You feel that you are part of something special.' There have been some recent staff changes. Newly qualified teachers settle in quickly because of the excellent support that they receive from an experienced team of middle and senior leaders.

Your school is a harmonious and inclusive community. You have developed a bright, lively and stimulating environment. I saw lots of lovely display work in every classroom, which celebrates pupils' work. Many pupils join and leave during the school year and many have recently arrived from other countries. Your team help

pupils to settle in quickly. Pupils are polite, respectful and they wear their uniform smartly. They behave well in lessons and during breaktimes. Pupils work well with each other regardless of ethnicity, background or ability. They say that they enjoy school. As one pupil said, 'Teachers make learning fun and make it easier for us. We are treated like part of a family.' Pupils welcome the opportunities to take part in a wide range of extra-curricular activities such as football and netball. Leaders organise residential visits which promote pupils' confidence and self-esteem.

You and your team have developed strong relationships with parents. Parents feel that teachers and leaders are very approachable and that they are listened to. A typical comment was, 'It's a brilliant school. The staff look after my children really well. My child has flourished and gone from strength to strength. I can't fault them in any way.' Many parents who responded to Parent View, Ofsted's online parental questionnaire, said that they would recommend the school to others.

Governors know the school well. They have the best interests of pupils and staff at the heart of their work. One governor commented, 'We want the school to be a happy place where children go home with smiles on their faces.' Regular visits provide opportunities for governors to see, at first hand, the work of the school. Governors provide effective challenge and support to leaders.

You have acted to address the areas for improvement since the last inspection. You have built in time for teachers to share their practice and therefore made certain that they have many opportunities to learn from each other. Leaders have provided training to improve teachers' questioning skills and, because of this, teachers use questioning well to probe and deepen pupils' understanding effectively.

Since the last inspection, pupils' outcomes have improved. In 2016, at the end of key stage 2, all pupils made at least expected progress in reading, writing and mathematics. Progress in writing and mathematics was significantly above the national average. The unvalidated overall progress scores for reading, writing and mathematics at the end of key stage 2 continue to be high in 2017. However, you acknowledge that more pupils need to improve the presentation of their work.

### **Safeguarding is effective.**

There is a strong culture of safeguarding throughout the school. Leaders ensure that safeguarding arrangements are fit for purpose. Records are detailed and of high quality. Suitable checks are made on visitors to school. All staff have completed relevant and recent training and, because of this, they know what to do if they have any concerns about pupils. Leaders know each of their pupils and families well and can support them when they face difficulties. Leaders work very effectively with outside agencies to protect any children who might be at risk. Pupils say that they feel safe and are well looked after in school. They report that bullying is rare. Pupils know who to go to if they do have any concerns. Parents who completed Ofsted's questionnaire, Parent View, were very positive about the school's work to keep their children safe.

## Inspection findings

- The inspection focused on several key lines of enquiry, the first of which related to attendance. The absence and persistent absence of disadvantaged pupils and those pupils who have special educational needs and/or disabilities have been higher than those of other pupils in the past. Leaders and the family support officer know individual pupils well and work closely with families. The pupil premium funding supports eligible pupils to attend breakfast club. The impact of these initiatives is that the attendance of disadvantaged pupils and pupils who have special educational needs and/or disabilities has increased alongside a reduction in their persistent absenteeism.
- The second focus for the inspection related to the provision for children in the early years. Over the last two years, the proportion of children who reached a good level of development was below the national average. Children enter the school in the Nursery or Reception Year with knowledge and skills that are well below those typical for their age. Many children have limited knowledge about language and little understanding of letters and the sounds that they make. The provision in the early years is well planned and stimulating. Children can explore many exciting activities. Their language and literacy skills are well supported. As a result, children get off to a good start and make good progress.
- In 2016, the proportion of pupils who attained the expected standard and greater depth in reading, writing and mathematics at the end of key stage 1 was below the national average. The teaching of reading comprehension skills is a whole-school focus. Pupils said that they now read more frequently than they used to. You also encourage reading by taking pupils to the local library. Pupils use their knowledge of sounds to break down unfamiliar words to be able to read them. Teachers use 'hooks' to capture pupils' imagination and provide them with the opportunity to write for a purpose. Work in pupils' mathematics books shows that mathematical knowledge is taught well so that pupils have a good grasp of number facts and calculation methods. My review of your data, scrutiny of pupils' work and discussions with pupils indicate that they are making good progress in reading, writing and mathematics. However, you have rightly identified that not all pupils present their work neatly.
- My line of enquiry relating to the progress of disadvantaged pupils in writing and mathematics in key stage 1 matched your own concerns. You had already identified that these pupils were not making rapid enough progress. You have a clear plan in place for the spending of the pupil premium fund and know this group of pupils very well. Consequently, you can support disadvantaged pupils in a focused way. Inspection evidence shows that these pupils are now catching up in mathematics. However, you recognise that disadvantaged pupils still need to reach higher standards in writing.
- My scrutiny of pupils' work and my discussions with pupils in lessons indicate that most of the activities set by teachers are closely matched to the ability of pupils. However, we agreed that the most able pupils are not sufficiently challenged in some year groups by the tasks that they are given.

## **Next steps for the school**

Leaders and those responsible for governance should ensure that:

- the presentation of pupils' work continues to improve
- the standards that disadvantaged pupils reach in writing at the end of key stage 1 improve further
- the most able pupils are challenged consistently across year groups so that they can reach greater depth in their learning.

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

Yours sincerely

Ahmed Marikar  
**Her Majesty's Inspector**

## **Information about the inspection**

During this short inspection I met with you, senior leaders and a group of middle leaders and teachers. I met with three members of the governing body, including the chair of the governing body. I also held a telephone conversation with a representative from the local authority. Eight pupils from key stage 2 met with me and I spoke with others during breaktimes. I visited a number of classes, where I observed teaching and learning, looked at pupils' work and spoke with pupils. I listened to pupils read from Year 2 and Year 6. I carried out a work scrutiny of pupils' work across the school. Parents talked with me as they dropped their children off at school. In addition, I took account of 26 responses to Parent View, the Ofsted online questionnaire, including 25 free-text responses. I also considered the views of 27 staff through Ofsted's online questionnaires. No responses were received to the online questionnaire for pupils. A range of documentation was scrutinised, including the school's self-evaluation and information about pupils' attainment and progress. I evaluated safeguarding procedures, including policies to keep children safe, records of training, safeguarding checks and attendance and behaviour information. I also undertook a review of the school's website.