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1 May 2018

Mr Stuart Brady
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Dear Mr Brady

Short inspection of Bidston Avenue Primary School

Following my visit to the school on 17 April 2018, 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 October 2014.

This school continues to be good.

The leadership team has maintained the good quality of education in the school since the last inspection. Your passion for learning and unwavering commitment to provide rich learning opportunities for pupils permeates everything you do. You have developed a culture of respect and professionalism and you are reflective in the decisions you make. Your high aspirations are shared by governors and staff as you strive to live up to the school motto and 'achieve together'.

You and your staff have tackled the areas for improvement successfully from the last inspection. Training for middle leaders has ensured that they have the skills they need to monitor their areas of responsibility effectively. They accurately identify any improvements that need to be made and check the impact of the actions taken. This has been particularly successful with the changes you have made to the way that you teach mathematics. You have identified that you need to further embed the effective changes you have made to the way you teach reading. We discussed this during the inspection. In the early years, you have improved the quality of the provision successfully, particularly in the outdoor area. We looked at this in more detail during the inspection.

The quality of teaching has improved since the last inspection. There is a culture of professional dialogue; staff appreciate the opportunities to work with other colleagues and share expertise. Leaders have ensured that staff have the skills and knowledge that they need. Consequently, learning activities accurately match the needs and interests of pupils, particularly the most able. Teachers use a range of

assessment activities to accurately identify the precise gaps in pupils' learning. As a result, pupils are given the help that they need to help them catch up quickly. Leaders work with colleagues from other schools to check their judgements are accurate.

Pupils are extremely confident, polite and well-mannered. Pupils speak enthusiastically about the way in which teachers make learning fun and interesting. They were eager to tell me about the broad range of activities including science experiments and visits to local landmarks as part of their study of local history. They enjoy the opportunities they have to participate in a wide range of sporting activities and cultural events. For example, a recent visit to a school in China was described by pupils as 'a once-in-a-lifetime opportunity'. The older pupils take their responsibilities very seriously as members of committees and as peer mediators. They organise fundraising events to help others, including a 'bake-off' and the 'walk a mile a day' challenge, which is also helping them to keep fit and healthy. They are proud of their school and feel valued and cared for.

The overwhelming majority of parents spoken to during the inspection, and those who accessed Ofsted's online questionnaire, were very positive about the school. Parents appreciate the wide range of opportunities you provide for their children. Parents of pupils who have special educational needs (SEN) and/or disabilities spoke highly of the support their children had received and the progress that they make. The views of parents can be summed up by a comment: 'Teachers go the extra mile with all the extra things that they do and the children love learning.'

Safeguarding is effective.

The leadership team has ensured that all safeguarding arrangements are fit for purpose. A strong culture of safeguarding is evident in all aspects of school life. Safeguarding arrangements are understood by staff and governors. Staff receive regular training and timely updates on relevant safeguarding issues. Staff are vigilant and as a result, the most vulnerable pupils are identified quickly. You work very effectively with additional agencies to ensure that pupils and their families receive the help that they need.

Pupils say they feel safe at school. They understand the different forms of bullying and speak confidently that if there was any it would be sorted out very quickly. They know how to keep themselves safe online and in other situations. Pupils who spoke to me said: 'Circle time is a good opportunity to discuss any problems you may have in a safe environment.' They also appreciate the 'keep safe' assemblies you have before each school holiday.

Inspection findings

- During the inspection, we looked at a number of key lines of enquiry. The first was about attendance. Attendance has improved since the last inspection and remains above the national average for the majority of pupils. You have been relentless in your drive to improve the attendance of a number of pupils who are

persistently absent. Although attendance rates are beginning to improve for this group of pupils, there is still a need for further improvement, so that pupils' absence does not hinder the progress that they make. Staff swiftly follow up when pupils are absent. You know your families very well and there are very specific reasons why some pupils are absent. You work closely with other agencies to provide the support that vulnerable families need to improve their children's attendance. You have introduced a number of incentives which are having a positive impact.

- Next, we looked at the provision for pupils who have SEN and/or disabilities. There were very specific reasons why the progress of pupils who have SEN and/or disabilities dipped in 2017. Bespoke training for staff ensures that they are able to accurately identify the precise gaps in pupils' learning. Pupils are given the help that they need either individually, or in small groups. Leaders closely monitor the impact of the help that pupils receive to ensure that they are making progress and catching up quickly. Leaders and staff work with a number of professionals and agencies to ensure that pupils who have SEN and/or disabilities receive the resources and specialist support that they need. Highly trained staff work with colleagues from a local specialist school. As a result, the majority of pupils who have SEN and/or disabilities are making expected or better progress. Where progress is slower for some pupils, as a result of their specific needs, leaders' detailed records show that they are making small steps towards success.
- We also discussed the need to ensure that a higher proportion of pupils reach the standard expected in phonics by the end of Year 1. Leaders quickly resolved concerns about the quality of teaching. Leaders ensure that staff have the training that they need to teach phonics accurately and consistently. Staff work together to share ideas and expertise. The good subject knowledge that staff have contributes to the progress that pupils make. Teachers quickly identify any pupils who are struggling and provide the help that they need to catch up quickly. Workshops for parents explain how phonics is taught in school and provide advice on how parents can help their children at home. Reading resources accurately match pupils' phonetic skills. As a result, pupils use their phonic skills confidently when they are reading and are also applying their knowledge in their writing.
- Next, we discussed the actions that have been taken to improve outcomes for children at the end of Reception. The majority of children start school with knowledge and skills below those typical for their age. Leaders have accurately identified the barriers to children's learning, particularly the development of language and communication, and personal, social and emotional development. As a result of the well-thought-through activities in the summer term, children settle quickly from the several local early years providers they attend before starting Reception.
- Children thrive in the exciting and purposeful learning environment you have created. Extremely positive relationships and attitudes to learning contribute to the progress that children make. Leaders identify swiftly what the 'next steps' in children's learning need to be in order to accelerate their rates of progress throughout the year. Learning activities are crafted to excite the children's interests and meet their needs. Skilled staff use questions effectively to

encourage children to expand their ideas and explanations. Mispronunciations, and misconceptions are addressed quickly and sensitively. Teachers provide children with opportunities to apply, practise and refine their skills, especially in writing. For example, in the 'vet' area, children were filling in forms with information about their pets and using their phonic skills accurately to make signs for the treats owners could buy. Improvements in the outdoor area have greatly enhanced the learning experiences and opportunities for the children. You work closely with other colleagues in the local group of schools to ensure your assessments are accurate. The majority of children are on track to reach a good level of development by the end of Reception, ready for Year 1.

- Finally, we looked at the actions you have taken to increase the proportion of disadvantaged pupils who reach the expected standards by the end of key stage 2 in reading. As a result of detailed analysis, you took the decisive action to change the way you teach reading. You accurately identified that the key barriers were pupils' skills and understanding in comprehension and inference, particularly disadvantaged pupils. You have ensured that staff have the skills and knowledge they need to meet the needs of the pupils effectively. Teachers use assessment accurately to identify the precise gaps in pupils' learning. Learning activities accurately match the needs of the pupils, including the most able. Skilled staff work with pupils who are struggling to ensure that they receive the help that they need to catch up quickly. Leaders monitor the impact of these sessions to ensure that they are having a positive impact on the progress pupils make, particularly disadvantaged pupils. Pupils who spoke to me said, 'The intervention groups really help you to fill in the gaps where you get stuck.'
- Information sessions and workshops for parents have been well attended. As a result, parents have the skills and knowledge that they need to help their children at home. Leaders have developed an environment that encourages reading. Older pupils enjoy the challenges and appreciate how reading can help them in all other areas of their learning. Pupils enjoy the opportunity to read and listen to a broad range of literature. A pupil who spoke to me said, 'Reading is very important because it helps to learn about other things, how to spell words and how to find out what new words mean.' The majority of pupils, particularly the disadvantaged pupils, are on track to reach a standard typical for their age by the end of the academic year. An increasing proportion of pupils are working at a greater depth. However, this is not the case for disadvantaged pupils.

Next steps for the school

Leaders and those responsible for governance should ensure that:

- they build on the positive relationships with parents to ensure that pupils who are persistently absent attend school each day
- they further embed the effective changes you have made to the way you teach reading so that the progress pupils make, particularly the disadvantaged, is accelerated and a higher proportion are working at a greater depth by the end of key stage 2.

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

Yours sincerely

Amanda Stringer
Her Majesty's Inspector

Information about the inspection

During this inspection, I met with you, other members of the leadership team and staff. I also met with eight members of the governing body and with a representative of the local authority. I conducted a learning walk with you and we visited classrooms, where I had the opportunity to speak with pupils and look at their work. I met with a group of pupils formally during the day and I spoke with a number of parents at the start of the school day. I took account of the 22 responses on the staff questionnaire. I also took account of the 22 free-text comments and the 35 responses to Parent View, Ofsted's online questionnaire for parents. I scrutinised pupils' assessment information, the school's self-evaluation document and your school improvement plan. I scrutinised the single central record and other documents relating to safeguarding and child protection procedures and practices.