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Mrs Katherine Spencer  
Headteacher  
Madley Brook Community Primary School  
At the Bronze Barrow  
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Dear Mrs Spencer

### **Short inspection of Madley Brook Community Primary School**

Following my visit to the school on 12 July 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. You have steadfastly improved many aspects of the school and developed your staff and senior leadership team in the process. For instance, you have made positive changes to the early years provision. Leaders and teaching staff have ensured that pupils across the school both enjoy reading and achieve highly in key stage 1 and key stage 2 national reading tests. However, you acknowledge that improvements in phonics and key stage 2 mathematics have not been as effective as other changes you have implemented. Staff turbulence has been a factor in this but you rightly identify that other factors have been at play too. You have strong plans in place to make sure that the next phase of improvement in these areas is more far-reaching in its impact. You have wisely made visits to local good or better schools to see planned new approaches in action and to learn about the best ways of implementing them.

You and your staff are very reflective and, as a result, constantly seek to make the school as good as it can be. Staff appreciate the opportunity to review and develop their practice. A while ago, following your comprehensive monitoring, you identified that some pupils play too roughly at break- and lunchtimes. You have tackled this swiftly by clarifying your expectations of pupils' behaviour. Staff also monitor pupils' behaviour during break- and lunchtimes more closely and ensure that pupils meet your raised expectations. Pupils told me that playtimes are now calmer, because of your firmness.

Pupils also commented on how much they benefit from sharing the school site with a special school, particularly in terms of broadening their understanding of the needs of others. Pupils are clear about how they can put the school's values into practice through their day-to-day good conduct, as well as by taking on additional leadership roles as peer mentor or playground buddy. The atmosphere around school is both calm and confident.

Pupils work quietly on the tasks they are set, which often stimulate and challenge them. When I visited classes, I saw pupils working very well with their partners, discussing their ideas, checking their hypotheses and planning writing collaboratively. Pupils are eager to succeed. They ask their teachers carefully considered questions to check whether they have come up with the best ways of approaching the tasks they are set. On the afternoon of the visit, all pupils were watching a drama production of 'The Wizard of Oz' as an end-of-year reward. Pupils nevertheless were working studiously on challenging tasks in their morning lessons.

Following some disappointing results in key stage 1 mathematics in 2016, you have worked closely with a specialist consultant to train staff in new approaches to teaching mathematics. These approaches have been successful in key stage 1. In particular, teachers have developed pupils' reasoning and problem-solving skills effectively by ensuring that the tasks they set require a deeper level of thinking. For example, pupils in Year 2 were calculating how to use the numbers rolled by dice to form two numbers that would make 100 or the closest number to 100. This task required a range of mathematical skills, such as application of number place, calculation skills and reasoning. Consequently, according to unverified data, a much higher proportion of Year 2 pupils achieved greater depth in this year's mathematics national tests, compared with 2016. However, you agree that this approach is not yet a consistent feature of teaching across key stage 2. You have strong plans in place to rectify this. Similarly, although changes to phonics teaching have enabled pupils to make strong progress from their starting points, the proportion of pupils reaching the phonics screening check standard has not increased. You have very comprehensive plans to improve this.

You have implemented many of the areas for improvement from your previous inspection report. Most notably, you have made changes to assessment and the tracking of pupils' progress. New approaches enable teachers to identify pupils whose progress is weaker and keep a close eye on any gaps pupils have in their knowledge, skills and understanding. However, you do not routinely set progress targets that will enable pupils who have fallen behind to catch up or pupils who have potential, especially disadvantaged pupils, to reach it.

The governing body is newly formed, leaner than it was and very committed to moving the school forward. Governors take their roles very seriously and have developed a thorough understanding of the school's strengths and weaknesses. Governors have systematically and successfully developed their skills and understanding, including undertaking training about how to respond to complaints and interpret data. Governors are making good use of their training, for example when challenging senior leaders to account for the impact of changes.

## **Safeguarding is effective.**

Safeguarding procedures and policies are fit for purpose. You have carefully considered all aspects of safeguarding, including signing-in protocols. These have been carefully designed so staff can identify very easily visitors who have not undergone safety checks. You keep close tabs on the safeguarding training that the staff have undertaken and ensure that all staff understand fully what to do if they have a concern. Your work in this area is thorough and includes a detailed audit after the training has been completed to ascertain whether individual members of staff have any additional training needs or misconceptions. You have received positive feedback from the local authority on the quality of referrals you make to it, which are highly detailed. You have responded well to strengthen procedures when concerns have been brought to your attention.

## **Inspection findings**

- During this inspection, I focused on all aspects of safety, including bullying. I also reviewed how effectively you have developed teaching in mathematics, phonics, and early years, as well as whether the curriculum is stretching enough to enable pupils, especially most-able disadvantaged pupils, to make the rapid progress of which they are capable. I also explored with you whether governors and middle leaders share your high expectations of pupils' capabilities.
- Safeguarding arrangements have been strengthened by your recent clarification of protocols for collecting pupils at the end of the school day, helpfully posted on your website. Pupils told me that they feel really safe in school.
- You have thoughtfully developed pupil leadership roles, which focus on providing assistance to others. Playground buddies and peer mentors have been well trained to spot and chat to pupils who may feel isolated or in need of support.
- You also seek the views of parents tirelessly and use their feedback when reflecting upon and evaluating your own practice. The majority of parents were very positive about the school when making comments both on Parent View and your own detailed questionnaire. Comments such as, 'Every day is a fun day and because of this my children are thriving with all aspects of their education and are always happy to attend,' were not uncommon.
- You show your commitment to reflecting on your practice by taking every opportunity to review and evaluate your work. In particular, you have undertaken joint reviews with a representative from the multi-academy trust you are hoping to join. These reviews have enabled you to prioritise improvements. You have sensibly followed up on any recommendations, using the expertise from within the multi-academy trust to train your teaching staff. Similarly, the headteacher who is supporting you on behalf of the local authority has provided you with detailed and robust feedback, which you are using to good effect.

- In order to augment the impact of the governing body and ensure better communication, there are no longer any governor committees. These have been replaced by more frequent full governing body meetings. As a result, governors have been able to play a considerable role in the process of choosing new approaches to teaching. They challenge leaders to justify the difference any proposed expenditure on new approaches will make to pupils' learning and well-being.
- You have successfully improved outcomes in the early years setting by introducing more opportunities for children to practise writing letters of the alphabet and to rehearse the sounds they represent. This year, the proportion of children reaching a good level of development has improved substantially compared with last year, and is well above 2016 national averages.
- You acknowledge that improvements in phonics have not led to a substantial increase in the proportion of pupils reaching the expected standard in the phonics screening check. In particular, in 2016 a number of pupils were close to the standard and just missed it. You are working intensively with all pupils who did not reach the standard to ensure that they have the phonic skills necessary to access the curriculum in Year 2. You have well-researched plans to make far-reaching changes to phonics teaching.
- Improvements in mathematics are impressive in key stage 1 but slightly less so in key stage 2. Although some teachers, especially in upper key stage 2, are setting tasks which require pupils to apply their knowledge, not all key stage 2 teachers have embedded this practice. Early unverified data shows that in 2017, the proportion of pupils reaching the expected standard in key stage 2 tests in mathematics is lower than in 2016. You have already identified this as an issue and have strong plans in place to improve results.
- Middle leaders and subject leaders contribute to improvements well and have strengthened the curriculum in a range of subjects. In science, there are more opportunities for pupils to explore scientific ideas in writing and explain hypotheses. Middle leaders use tracking information accurately to identify pupils whose progress is further scrutinised in pupil progress meetings. However, they do not routinely check that pupils' targets enable those who have fallen behind to catch up or pupils with academic potential to make the rapid progress of which they are capable.
- Pupils' scores are higher in reading than in other subjects and a higher percentage reach greater depth in national tests and assessments. Reading is very well developed, with pupils choosing books to read for pleasure from the well-stocked library.

### **Next steps for the school**

Leaders and those responsible for governance should ensure that:

- approaches to assessment support targeted pupils, particularly disadvantaged pupils with potential, and those who need to catch up, in making rapid progress.

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

Yours sincerely

Sarah Hubbard  
**Her Majesty's Inspector**

### **Information about the inspection**

During the inspection, initially I met with you to agree the key lines of enquiry and later to discuss safeguarding and attendance. In addition, I held separate meetings with subject- and year-group leaders, senior leaders to discuss outcomes, the chair of governing body, along with two other governors, and also informally with parents at the start of the day. I made phone calls to the headteacher who provides support for the school on behalf of the local authority and a representative from the multi-academy trust that you are hoping to join, who has helped you. I listened to a group of pupils read and talked with them about their school. You accompanied me on short visits to a number of lessons, including in early years, to observe teaching. I also observed pupils' behaviour in a range of situations, including lessons and around school. The 45 responses parents made in reply to Ofsted's online questionnaire, Parent View, and 24 comments made via free text were considered. I also considered 30 responses to the staff questionnaire and 57 replies to the pupil survey. I analysed a range of documentation, including the school's self-evaluation, the latest improvement plan, information about pupils' progress and safeguarding documentation.