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Piccadilly Gate
Store Street
Manchester
M1 2WD

T 0300 123 4234
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Mrs Virginia Gilks
Headteacher
Bromham CofE Primary School
Grange Lane
Bromham
Bedford
Bedfordshire
MK43 8NR

Dear Mrs Gilks

Short inspection of Bromham CofE Primary School

Following my visit to the school on 21 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 July 2013.

This school continues to be good.

You, the leadership team and governors have maintained the good quality of education in the school since the last inspection.

Pupils enjoy their time at school, want to do well and take pride in their learning. Strong relationships have already been forged between pupils and their new teachers, demonstrated by the exemplary behaviour in every classroom and the enthusiasm with which pupils speak about their lessons. Pupils welcomed me as a visitor to their school and were keen to talk about their learning and what it is like to be a pupil at Bromham CofE Primary School. Parents who responded to Ofsted's online survey, Parent View, were overwhelmingly supportive of the school and its leadership, agreeing that their children are happy and well looked after.

In September 2017, the school took pupils into Year 5 for the first time, and it will become a full primary school with provision for pupils from four to 11 in September 2018. With the support of your governing body, your leadership team has prepared well for these changes, managing a new build and the need to improve facilities to meet the needs of older pupils. While you are expanding the school, you remain determined that every pupil will continue to be well known as an individual because of the values that underpin everything you do. Pupils are taught British values and are encouraged to develop an understanding of values such as respect and resilience through assemblies and classroom activities. Year 5 pupils told me that they provide support for younger ones by acting as 'buddies' at break and

lunchtime. On the playground, children play together in a friendly and considerate way.

Improvements in provision continue as the school uses its sport premium funding to ensure that there is a full range of sporting opportunities for all pupils to take part in. This will include, for example, hockey, basketball and cricket for the first time this year. The school already has a full extra-curricular sporting programme. On the day of the inspection, the running club still set out despite the rain and Reception children were joining the dance class for the first time. A wide variety of non-sporting clubs is also on offer, including Hama beads, Lego and dinosaur clubs.

Children make good progress from their starting points in Reception. They arrive with development broadly typical for their age. By the time they move into Year 1, a greater proportion of them have reached a good level of development compared to their peers nationally. When I visited the Reception class, it was difficult to believe that the children had only been in school for less than two weeks. Staff have high expectations of behaviour, which the children have risen to, and teachers provide stimulating and varied activities designed not only to assess children's starting points but also to begin their learning journey immediately. Parents' comments on Ofsted's online survey, Parent View, reinforce this picture of children who have settled quickly and who are already making progress in their learning.

You and your team responded swiftly to a drop in the proportion of Year 1 pupils who reached the required standard in the phonics screening check in 2016. You changed the way pupils are grouped for their lessons and provided extra training for both teachers and teaching assistants. The impact of this is clear from the greatly improved results of the unvalidated 2017 phonics screening check, where 93% of pupils reached the required standard. Of the pupils who did not make the standard in 2016, only a small minority did not achieve this by the end of Year 2. By the end of key stage 1, in reading and writing, pupils achieve broadly in line with their peers nationally. They do particularly well in reading and pupils told me that 'reading is important and we do it a lot'.

Teachers plan interesting activities to engage pupils in their learning. For example, while visiting a Year 3 class studying the Second World War, we were interrupted by an air-raid siren. At this point, the pupils left the classroom to crowd into a makeshift Anderson shelter. The writing they produced later in the day clearly captured the cramped and uncomfortable experience that this must have been for wartime children.

Your senior and middle leaders ensure that the school's marking and feedback policy is applied consistently and comments from teachers in pupils' books are usually helpful. Most pupils were able to tell me with confidence what they have to do to improve their work. Since the previous inspection, your subject leaders have taken on more responsibility for monitoring the effectiveness of teaching, training other members of staff and using progress information to inform classroom practice.

Safeguarding is effective.

You ensure that staff are well informed and trained about new safeguarding guidance through regular training and updates. Staff understand their responsibilities and know what to do if they have any concerns. You engage effectively with outside agencies when extra support is needed for your more vulnerable pupils and ensure that, in school, they have the care they need to help them focus on their learning. Pupils who spoke to me during the inspection said that they feel safe and parents overwhelmingly agree that their children are kept safe in the school. The curriculum helps to raise awareness in children of how to keep themselves safe right from the time they start in Reception, when they focus on learning who to trust.

Your governing body is well aware of its statutory duty to keep children safe and has gone beyond this by introducing extra measures to protect children and young people, such as controlling mobile phone use by adults on the site.

Inspection findings

- To determine whether the school remains good, one of my lines of enquiry was to look at how well your most able pupils achieve in reading, writing and mathematics by the end of key stage 1. In 2016, a smaller proportion of your Year 2 pupils achieved greater depth in reading, writing and mathematics than other pupils nationally. Your response to this included providing more opportunities for your most able pupils to access extra support from well-trained teaching assistants to boost their reading comprehension. The unvalidated results for 2017 show that this has helped to raise the proportion of Year 2 pupils who achieved greater depth in reading and writing to above the national figures for 2016.
- However, teachers do not always make the most of opportunities in lessons to match activities to the ability of different groups of pupils. Written feedback given to the most able pupils too often simply praises them rather than challenging them further by providing them with the next steps in their learning, as expected from the school's marking policy. This means that they do not always make the progress they are truly capable of.
- The teaching of mathematics was also an area I wanted to look at with you. Although the unvalidated results for 2017 demonstrate that you have increased the proportion of pupils reaching greater depth in mathematics by the end of key stage 1, this still remains below national expectations. You have rightly identified mathematics as an area that still needs improvement. Since the previous inspection, you have invested in staff training and more practical resources for use in mathematics lessons, and this has had an impact on the quality of teaching overall, with pupils telling me how much they enjoy mathematics. The pace of progress in all year groups is improving. Evidence from pupils' books also shows more opportunities for them to deepen their mathematical understanding because they have to explain not only how they reach their answers, but also why an answer is right or wrong. Initiatives such as encouraging parents to work with their children at home through online activities have yet to have an impact

but demonstrate your commitment to using a variety of approaches to improve outcomes for your pupils.

- The numbers of pupils who have special educational needs and/or disabilities, who speak English as an additional language and who are disadvantaged are small and vary from year to year. This makes comparisons based on outcomes from national assessment points difficult and so I wanted to examine how well these children are provided for on an individual basis. The bespoke support you offer these pupils is having a positive impact on their well-being and progress. You have ensured that your teaching assistants are well trained and, whether working in class alongside a teacher, one to one or with a small group, they have the skills to meet the individual needs of a range of pupils effectively. Your pupils who have special educational needs and/or disabilities do well from their various starting points.
- I also wanted to check how ready you are to meet the educational needs of upper key stage 2 pupils for the first time. You and the governing body responded early to recruit new staff with recent middle-school experience. You have a teacher in place from September to work alongside your experienced assistant headteacher to develop the upper key stage 2 curriculum. The Year 5 curriculum you have developed covers the required knowledge and skills for this age range. You and your governing body plan to continue to use external expertise to ensure that work is assessed at the right level and that Year 5 pupils make appropriate progress so that they are ready to meet the challenges of the assessments at the end of key stage 2 in 2019.

Next steps for the school

Leaders and those responsible for governance should ensure that:

- teachers' planning and marking take into account the needs of all groups of pupils, especially the most able
- the teaching of mathematics continues to improve outcomes for all pupils, especially the most able
- pupils in Year 5, and Year 6 from 2018, are well prepared across all areas of the curriculum for the challenges of key stage 3.

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

Yours sincerely

Lesley Daniel
Ofsted Inspector

Information about the inspection

During the inspection, I met with you, your special educational needs coordinator, your assistant headteachers, subject leaders, members of the governing body and your school improvement partner.

I visited classes with you where I observed pupils learning and talked to them about their work and their school. In lessons, we looked at pupils' work in books to determine the quality of learning over time and the quality of learning across the curriculum.

I spent time speaking informally with pupils in class and at lunchtime, as well as taking into account the views of the 24 pupils who completed the online Ofsted questionnaire. I also considered the 104 responses to Parent View, which included free-text comments, as well as the comments from parents who contacted me via letter and email during the inspection. The views of staff expressed through the 23 responses to the staff survey were also considered.

I scrutinised the school's documents about safeguarding, including the record of checks on the suitability of each member of staff to work with children and young people, the school's own evaluation of its performance and your plans for its improvement.