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Ms Marianne Porter  
Headteacher  
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Dear Ms Porter

### **Short inspection of Brecknock Primary School**

Following my visit to the school on 22 November 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 became headteacher in 2015. Since that time, you have ensured that pupils' achievement and the development of leaders have been the school's main priorities. As a result, progress and attainment remain high and you have enabled an enthusiastic senior and middle leadership team to continue to secure further improvements.

Since the previous inspection, there have been considerable changes to the leadership of the school. You have established an effective senior team, comprising experienced leaders and new appointments. This has provided the school with stability. You have successfully focused on improving areas that were raised in the last inspection. For example, achievement at the end of key stage 1 in English and mathematics has risen, and is now broadly average. A systematic phonics programme is used well. Adults skilfully engage with pupils to develop their early phonics knowledge. As a result, the proportion of pupils achieving the phonics check at the end of Year 1 has risen.

Your vision for developing leaders at different stages of their careers has been effective in driving the school's improvements. Senior leaders are skilled in improving pupils' outcomes, including attendance. Leaders have continued to ensure that the development of mathematics teaching has remained a priority. As a result, attainment has risen markedly. Pupils' progress remains consistently among the highest of all schools nationally. However, the achievement of pupils in reading at the end of key stage 2 is not as strong. Leaders' actions to improve reading have

not been as successful.

You have further strengthened the school's leadership by appointing middle leaders to monitor the quality of teaching. They work alongside senior leaders and external partners to check on the quality of work in pupils' books and provide support to teachers to improve their practice. As a result, there is greater accountability among staff for the quality of teaching and pupils' progress. However, middle leaders have not been as focused on the school's priority area to develop pupils' reading as they should have been. Consequently, teachers' expectations in developing pupils' reading skills are not as high as they are in other subjects, particularly at key stage 2.

Governors have a good understanding of the school's priorities. They have made a strong contribution in guiding the strategic direction of the school. As a result, they are able to speak articulately about the school's progress to date. Governors are ambitious for the school and take part in 'phase reviews' to develop a better understanding of leaders' work. They have ensured that the appointment of new staff has enabled leaders to use more of their time to develop teaching and learning.

Pupils are well looked after and demonstrate positive attitudes to their learning. Parents are supportive of the school and appreciate the friendly and welcoming atmosphere. A number of parents said that they would like the school's communication with parents to be improved, particularly around last-minute changes, and opportunities to further support pupils' learning at home.

### **Safeguarding is effective.**

Leaders have ensured that safeguarding arrangements are fit for purpose. They place a high importance on pupils' safety. Pre-employment checks are thorough and meet requirements. Staff have a good understanding of safeguarding procedures, reflecting the most recent guidance. For example, staff confidently shared their understanding of risks related to female genital mutilation and their statutory responsibilities to refer any concerns to the police.

Governors play an active role in checking on the school's safeguarding arrangements. For example, a link safeguarding governor has attended safeguarding training and audited the provision for pupils' safety in the school. As a result, minor recommendations raised during an external review of safeguarding were actioned in a timely manner. Leaders' attention to developing pupils' opportunities to discuss sensitive topics has been effective.

Leaders have a strong understanding of the potential risks that vulnerable pupils may face. Staff are vigilant and readily share concerns with the designated safeguarding leads. Leaders make good use of external agencies for guidance, and seek specialist advice when appropriate. Staff share the United Nation's Rights Respecting Charter extremely well with pupils. As a result, pupils are confident in articulating their understanding of their own rights. They feel very safe at school.

Pupils positively share how adults in the school help them to keep safe online. Parents agree that the school is a caring environment for their children.

## **Inspection findings**

- We first agreed to check to see how effective leaders have been in improving pupils' attendance, particularly disadvantaged pupils and those who have special educational needs (SEN) and/or disabilities. In the past, the absence rates of these groups of pupils were high, compared with those of pupils nationally.
- Leaders check the attendance rates of different groups of pupils regularly. By meeting with parents both formally in meetings and informally on the playground, they have built up trusting relationships.
- A targeted list of pupils with weak attendance is followed up resolutely. Parents are invited to meet staff to discuss their child's poor attendance. Detailed information in the weekly newsletter raises the profile of regular attendance still further. Pupils who have minor illnesses are encouraged to come to school.
- Leaders use attendance information about individual pupils well to provide additional support. Staff discuss pupils' attendance rates in half-termly pupil progress meetings. Consequently, staff have a good understanding of the strategies being deployed to improve pupils' attendance.
- Termly rewards for 100% attendance are popular. Pupils told me that rewards at the end of term encourage them to come to school. Owing to a range of effective strategies, the attendance of all pupils has risen considerably, and is now average. The attendance of disadvantaged pupils and those who have SEN and/or disabilities is now similar to the national average.
- We next looked at pupils' achievement in reading. This was because past assessment information indicated that pupils' progress in reading at the end of key stage 2 was weaker than in writing and mathematics, particularly for the most able pupils.
- Leaders have correctly identified the development of reading as a priority for the school. Leaders have introduced a topic-based approach, which encourages pupils to read widely and often. They have invested in a number of additional books that reflect the history or geography topics pupils are learning. The most able pupils are encouraged to use these books to improve their research-based skills.
- A new reading approach to develop pupils' reading comprehension skills is used in some classes. Pupils are encouraged to develop deeper understanding of texts through good questioning. Teachers encourage pupils to read aloud with expression, and explore the meaning of new words and phrases. However, teachers' development in using this approach is inconsistent. Leaders have not ensured that teachers have securely established good practice across the school.
- At key stage 1, adults develop pupils' early reading skills well by encouraging them to use their phonics strategies to read a range of books. However, the most able pupils are over-reliant on using their phonics to read familiar words. As a result, their reading with expression and fluency is limited.

- The teaching of reading at key stage 2 is at an early stage of development. Pupils are beginning to understand the strategies required to help their comprehension skills. In stronger teaching, teachers use probing questions to deepen pupils' understanding of the text. However, teachers' expectations of pupils' responses during reading lessons are not as high as they are in other subjects.
- Pupils receive limited guidance to refine their answers and teachers do not routinely check pupils' understanding. As a result, pupils develop a limited understanding of how to improve their work. The most able pupils are not challenged with tasks that stretch their thinking.

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

Leaders and those responsible for governance should ensure that:

- pupils' progress and attainment in reading, particularly for the most able pupils in key stage 2, continue to rise by:
  - sharing and building on emerging good practice that can be found in the school
  - raising teachers' expectations of pupils' responses
  - ensuring that senior and middle leaders focus their actions on improving the teaching of reading.

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

Yours sincerely

Noeman Anwar  
**Her Majesty's Inspector**

### **Information about the inspection**

I met with senior and middle leaders to evaluate the school's priorities and carried out scrutiny of the school's documentation, including assessment and attendance information, school development plans, safeguarding information and external evaluations of teaching and learning. I held a meeting with governors and a telephone conversation with a representative from the local authority. I paid visits to classrooms accompanied by senior leaders and the literacy lead. An analysis of the responses to Ofsted's online surveys included 37 responses from parents and 35 responses from staff members.