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8 February 2019

Mrs Elizabeth Pearce
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Dear Mrs Pearce

Short inspection of Little Aston Primary School

Following my visit to the school on 29 January 2019, 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 2014.

This school continues to be good.

The leadership team has maintained the good quality of education in the school since the last inspection.

There have been changes to staffing and to the governing body since the previous inspection. You are determined that all pupils will receive the very highest quality of education. Training and support have been provided for all staff. You are well supported by two effective deputy headteachers and a group of middle leaders. This structure has been created to help raise standards even further.

You have created a united and supportive team. As a result, staff morale is high. All staff who responded to the inspection survey said that they were proud to work at Little Aston Primary. Parents and carers' views are equally positive. Of the responses received, the vast majority said that their children were happy and safe at school. One comment summed up the views of many, saying, 'The school and the people in it feel like an extension of our family.' A small number of parents expressed some concerns around a lack of timely communication from the school. This group of parents felt that they did not receive enough information about their child's progress.

Pupils say that it is 'OK to be different' at this school and that pupils' differences are celebrated. Pupils have a strong voice and are encouraged to articulate their views through debates on topics such as 'fox hunting' and 'remain or leave the European Union'. Pupils enjoy the wide range of extra-curricular activities and clubs offered.

This adds to pupils' creative, cultural and social development as well as encouraging them to develop musical and sporting talents. Pupils speak enthusiastically about taking part in competitions, such as singing at 'Young Voices' and taking part in cricket tournaments. Recognising the high level of inclusivity and opportunities provided, they say that wow moments come from working as a team.

You have worked effectively with other members of the Aston Brooke Co-operative Trust. Strong links with partner schools and local universities provide curriculum enhancement and enable children to aspire to future careers.

You have continued to address the areas for development identified at the last inspection. Timely and routine checks are made on pupils' use of spelling and grammar. Tasks set in classes are appropriately challenging for different groups of pupils. Pupils are given opportunities to apply literacy and numeracy skills across a wide range of subjects.

Safeguarding is effective.

The culture of safeguarding is strong. You ensure that staff and governors are well trained and are clear about policies and procedures. Safeguarding is a high priority for all and a regular item at both staff and governors' meetings. The record-keeping for the recruitment of staff is thorough and clear. Concerns about pupils are carefully logged and records are appropriately detailed. The leadership team has ensured that safeguarding arrangements are fit for purpose.

Pupils know how to keep themselves safe and are confident to tell an adult if they have a worry. Pupils know that their concerns will be sorted out. Through your curriculum and assemblies, you teach pupils about e-safety, fire safety and keeping safe, both as a cyclist and a pedestrian, when using roads in the locality.

Inspection findings

- The last inspection asked leaders to check the accuracy of pupils' use of grammar and spelling across all subjects. Staff took swift and effective action to introduce a list of 'non-negotiables', which are clearly displayed in the front of pupils' books. These give staff and pupils a constant reminder of the high standards expected of them. Teaching sequences in writing begin with a 'cold' write, where pupils are given a task to assess their knowledge and skills of a style of writing. This is followed by self-assessment, peer assessment and teacher assessment so that pupils are fully aware of the areas they need to improve. Effective teaching and feedback ensure that mistakes are not repeated. Pupils are then able to apply their learning to a 'hot' write, where they produce a high-quality piece of work. During the inspection, many examples of excellent writing were seen in pupils' books and displayed on walls.
- Pupils' progress by the end of key stage 2 is variable year on year. While high numbers of pupils typically achieve at and above age-related expectations by the end of Year 6, pupils' progress throughout key stage 2 could be even better. School leaders have been quick to put extra support in place; for example, new

approaches to the teaching of mathematics. Appropriate interventions are in place for those pupils who need to catch up most. Leaders check on the impact such strategies have on pupils' progress and change targets so that individual pupils' needs are met.

- The previous inspection asked staff to set work that was challenging for different groups of pupils. Pupils have access to bronze, silver and gold tasks that enable pupils to be challenged at an appropriate level. Pupils were able to explain that sometimes they undertook the bronze task to gain confidence before moving on to a harder task. Other pupils stated that they are given work at 'gold level' at the start of a lesson. Inspection evidence confirmed this, with many good examples observed of teachers and teaching assistants supporting pupils working on bronze-level activities, while other pupils within the class were working on much more demanding challenges. Active learning provides additional opportunities. For example, pupils worked outside on mathematics tasks that enabled the skills learned in class to be embedded in fun and exciting ways, including through physical challenges and problem-solving.
- The creative, broad and balanced curriculum is a strength of the school. It provides opportunities for pupils to develop their knowledge and skills across all subjects. A good example of this was when pupils read 'Blodin the Beast' by Michael Morpurgo. As part of a joint art and writing project, the story was 'woven', using a range of materials, to create the character Shanga's carpet of 'all that is good in the world.' Such projects engage pupils' interest and inspire them to write in exciting and meaningful contexts. Similarly, pre-school children were engaged in making 'Gruffalo Crumble' in response to the story by Julia Donaldson. Skills in mathematics are practised regularly in other subject areas, for example when constructing weather charts in geography and conducting a whole-school survey about physical education in school.

Next steps for the school

Leaders and those responsible for governance should ensure that they:

- continue to build on the good practice across the school to enable even more pupils to make strong progress by the end of key stage 2
- further involve parents so that they are fully informed of the progress their children are making and how they can support them at home.

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

Yours sincerely

Heather Phillips
Her Majesty's Inspector

Information about the inspection

During the inspection, I met with you, other members of the leadership team and teaching staff. I also met with governors, trustees, administrative staff and the school's business manager. I had a telephone call with a representative from the local authority.

I carried out short observations of teaching in all year groups and looked at pupils' work in books and on display. I talked with pupils in lessons and at breaktime and met with a small group of pupils to talk about school life and their work. I spoke with parents at the end of the school day.

By the end of the inspection, there were 59 responses on Parent View, the Ofsted online questionnaire, and 57 written comments. I took account of these responses and also considered 20 responses to Ofsted's staff questionnaire and 20 responses to the pupil questionnaire. I looked at several documents, including the school's own evaluation of its performance, records relating to the work of governors and subject leaders, pupils' records and several school policy documents. I also checked the school's website and the procedures for keeping pupils safe.