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Mrs Melanie Hignett
Headteacher
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Dear Mrs Hignett

Short inspection of Broad Oak Community Primary School

Following my visit to the school on 14 March 2019 with Linda Jones, Ofsted Inspector, 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. You know your school well and are accurate in your judgement of Broad Oak Primary School's strengths and improvement priorities. The school has many strengths, including leaders' and staff's commitment to the welfare and care of pupils and their families, the many opportunities available to pupils which they may not otherwise experience, and the school's tangible family ethos.

There is a strong, family feel, ensuring that the school lives out its vision: 'To learn and grow together in the Broad Oak family'. You are determined to raise aspirations for all pupils and the progress and attainment of current pupils are continuing to improve.

Children enter the Nursery and Reception classes with knowledge and skills below the standards typically expected for their age. From early years and throughout the school, leaders have prioritised speech and language development and health and self-care, as these are key barriers to learning. As a result of high-quality teaching and learning, supported by a range of therapeutic services, pupils are developing good language skills and attitudes to learning across key stage 1, giving them a strong foundation for future learning across the rest of the school.

Together with other leaders, staff and governors, you have developed a welcoming and inclusive school, with strong relationships between staff, pupils and their families. This enables pupils to flourish personally, socially and academically due to

carefully planned learning and support that address their particular needs. Pupils are polite, respectful of each other and are well mannered. They state that they enjoy lessons and value the various sports clubs, residential and day visits.

The vast majority of parents and carers feel that the school is very good at supporting their children and developing them academically. Some parents typically commented that, 'The school is amazing'. During discussions with inspectors, parents stated that they are pleased with their child's progress.

Leaders and staff have taken action to address the areas for improvement identified at the last inspection. You were asked to make sure that work set provides a suitable level of challenge, especially for the most able pupils, so that more of them attain the higher standards. Additional learning activities in both writing and mathematics are provided to enable these pupils to reach greater depth and the higher standards.

You have trained your staff to ensure that the development of a wider range of vocabulary is given a greater priority. Teachers have also introduced a much more structured approach to the teaching of writing. This approach encourages pupils to include various aspects of grammar and punctuation to meet the expectations. However, the most able pupils find the approach restrictive and, consequently, are not always able to write at their best.

In mathematics, leaders have introduced more opportunities for pupils to apply their knowledge and understanding to problem-solving and reasoning activities. This has been particularly effective in key stage 1, following engagement in a national research project. However, there are limited opportunities in other classes and pupils are unable to deepen their mathematical understanding or explain their answers in sufficient depth.

Published data for 2018 shows that progress has continued to improve at key stage 2, particularly in reading and mathematics. The number of Year 6 pupils attaining the higher standard in reading and mathematics in the national tests increased in 2018. Proportions of pupils attaining greater depth in writing also increased. However, proportions of pupils attaining the higher standards in reading and mathematics at both key stage 1 and key stage 2 remained below the national average.

Safeguarding is effective.

There is a strong culture of safeguarding in the school. Safeguarding procedures are fit for purpose and are sensitively deployed according to staff's knowledge of individual families. Leaders have fostered effective partnerships with a number of external agencies within the local authority to ensure that pupils receive appropriate support and guidance. Leaders and governors fulfil statutory requirements when appointing new members of staff.

Parents and pupils feel that the school is a safe place to be. Leaders, including

governors, ensure that staff receive high-quality training. As a result, staff know how to recognise the signs and symptoms of abuse. Staff are very clear about the school's procedures for reporting and recording any concerns they have regarding the safeguarding of pupils. Leaders are tenacious, but sympathetic, in their work to protect vulnerable pupils.

Pupils are taught how to keep themselves safe. Leaders have implemented clear programmes to teach pupils about personal and internet safety. Pupils understand the dangers associated with internet use and report concerns to staff.

Inspection findings

- In 2018, attainment in writing and mathematics at key stage 1 was below national averages at both the expected and higher standards. This was particularly the case for pupils with special educational needs and/or disabilities (SEND) and disadvantaged pupils. My first line of enquiry, therefore, was to find out what you have done to improve attainment, particularly for these pupils, in these subjects.
- Key stage 1 pupils write a range of pieces, including letters and recounts. Their sentence structure is beginning to be varied and they use vocabulary and descriptive phrases for effect. However, paragraphing is limited. Their stamina for writing is improving and they are beginning to write at greater length. However, not enough pupils write with sufficient accuracy to meet greater depth requirements, particularly in applying phonic knowledge to spelling. Disadvantaged pupils make similar progress to other pupils in school. Pupils with SEND make good progress from their starting points, with effective support from staff.
- Pupils in key stage 1 with SEND make good progress in mathematics from their starting points due to clear assessments of their learning needs and well-matched teaching. Year 2 pupils confidently work with two-digit numbers in calculations. They apply their mathematical knowledge well to problem-solving situations. They are beginning to draw on their improving mathematical vocabulary when explaining how they have gained answers.
- My second line of enquiry was to find out what leaders have done to improve the teaching of reading, particularly phonics in key stage 1, especially for pupils with SEND and disadvantaged pupils. The proportions of pupils meeting the requirements of the phonics check in Year 1 have remained below national averages. In Year 2, the proportion of pupils meeting the requirements of this check fell well below national averages in 2018. Attainment in reading at the end of key stage 1 in 2018 was below national averages and disadvantaged pupils' achievement was below national averages at both the expected and higher standards.
- Leaders have completed an audit of their phonics teaching. Following this review, they have introduced a much more effective system to teach phonics. Daily, focused sessions build effectively on pupils' prior knowledge and pupils are beginning to demonstrate their understanding when writing and reading. The teaching of phonics in the Nursery and Reception classes has improved and is

more focused on the needs of the children. Disadvantaged pupils' reading and phonics knowledge is of a similar standard to that of other pupils in school.

- Key stage 1 pupils have an improving knowledge of a range of reading strategies, including phonics and the use of picture cues. Lower-attaining pupils have a well-developed understanding of phonics in isolation, but lack the confidence to apply their knowledge to their reading. Other pupils' application of phonics to spelling is inconsistent. Disadvantaged pupils' knowledge of phonics is broadly similar to that of other pupils. Teachers plan appropriate phonic development for pupils with SEND, which allows them to make good progress from their lower starting points.
- Finally, I considered the progress pupils make across the curriculum in subjects other than English and mathematics. Leaders have used training and the advice from consultants to enhance teaching and their own leadership skills. Subject leaders have a clear understanding of the purpose and intent of the curriculum. They have ensured that subject-specific skills and vocabulary are encouraged and developed through training and sharing good teaching practice. Clear procedures to monitor the quality of teaching and learning have been implemented. These procedures and inspection evidence show that pupils are making good progress. In some subjects, teachers have raised their expectations of the school's curriculum and achievement; in art, for example, this has resulted in some wonderfully detailed pieces of artwork.

Next steps for the school

Leaders and those responsible for governance should ensure that they:

- increase the proportion of pupils attaining the higher standards in mathematics, by continuing to challenge pupils to deepen their mathematical knowledge and understanding through problem-solving and reasoning
- improve attainment and progress in reading and writing, by:
 - providing pupils with improved opportunities to use their initiative when writing at length
 - continuing to improve the teaching of phonics and pupils' application of phonics to their reading and writing.

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

Yours sincerely

Ian Shackleton

Ofsted Inspector

Information about the inspection

During the inspection, I met with you, your staff and members of the governing body. Inspectors also met with pupils to seek their views about the school. I spoke with representatives of the local authority. Inspectors also spoke with pupils informally in the classroom and at lunchtime.

Inspectors observed teaching and learning alongside senior leaders and they scrutinised pupils' writing and mathematics across key stage 1. They also spoke to pupils about their reading and listened to them read. Inspectors also looked at work in subjects other than English and mathematics alongside subject leaders.

Inspectors examined and discussed a range of documents, including those relating to safeguarding and improvement priorities. I looked at the school's self-evaluation and assessment information.

Inspectors considered the views expressed by parents gathered in the playground before the start of the school day and 32 responses to Ofsted's online survey, Parent View. I also considered the 40 responses to the staff survey.