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Mr Mark Stubbings
Headteacher
Brookfield Primary School
Chester Road
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Dear Mr Stubbings

Short inspection of Brookfield Primary School

Following my visit to the school on 19 April 2018, 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 June 2014.

This school continues to be good.

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

Since the last inspection, there has been a large turnover of staff. You and the governing body have made changes to the leadership structure of the school and to the support team, effective from September 2017. Senior and middle leaders are improving the quality of teaching effectively. Leaders take part in professional development opportunities, including national initiatives such as on improving the teaching of mathematics across the country. They learn from and share best practice within the school and with a number of other schools. Leaders help teachers plan and deliver successful lessons, support their professional development and hold them to account for pupils' progress.

Pupils continue to make good progress overall from their starting points. In 2017, the proportion of Year 6 pupils attaining the expected standards in reading, writing and mathematics was average. Those attaining greater depth was above average. Notably, progress in reading was significantly above average. You correctly identified that outcomes in writing across the school were weaker than in reading and mathematics. Early years leaders and the literacy leader have introduced some new strategies for improving the teaching of writing across the school. Assessment information shows that current pupils are making better progress than before.

The school continues to give pupils many exciting and stimulating enrichment activities that make a strong contribution to their learning and personal development. This year, the school is working with an external provider who

delivers sessions in all year groups to help pupils learn and perform Shakespearean plays. They also deliver training for the teachers and prepare the pupils to perform plays in front of parental audiences. This initiative is having a positive impact on pupils' understanding of great literary works and on their writing and articulacy. Performances make a positive contribution to building pupils' oracy skills and their confidence.

Safeguarding is effective.

The arrangements for safeguarding are effective. The designated safeguarding leaders know the pupils and their families well. They provide staff with regular training. Leaders, including governors and members of staff, have a good understanding of the potential safeguarding risks in the local community. Members of staff are vigilant and report immediately any concerns that they may have about a pupil's welfare.

Leaders work closely with parents and carers and with external agencies, such as the local authority early help team, to make sure that pupils' safety and welfare are assured.

The curriculum helps pupils to understand how to keep themselves safe in different situations. This includes lessons and assemblies on how to stay safe when using social media or electrical equipment. The National Society for the Prevention of Cruelty to Children delivered some workshops and assemblies on their 'Speak out Stay safe' programme. It aims to give pupils the knowledge and understanding they need to stay safe from abuse and neglect.

The leadership team has ensured that all safeguarding arrangements are fit for purpose, and records are detailed and of a very high quality.

Inspection findings

- The last inspection report said that leaders should make learning in the early years more challenging, especially in developing children's literacy skills. Inspectors also recommended that leaders should make the indoor and outdoor learning environment in the Nursery and Reception classes richer and more stimulating.
- There was a major change in early years staffing in September 2017. The deputy headteacher is now the early years leader, and all staff, except one teacher, were new in post. A new early years teacher has particular expertise in teaching writing and has trained other members of staff across the school on how to improve their teaching of writing. Leaders have also introduced some new approaches for improving children's reading. In addition, there are small support groups for disadvantaged children, specially designed to help them catch up with their language and communication skills. These initiatives are having a positive impact. Assessment information shows that a higher proportion of children are on track this year to reach a good level of development by the end of Reception.

- The Reception outdoors provision has been expanded. There are plentiful opportunities for children to develop their gross motor skills and to experiment with water, mud kitchens and art, for example. The Nursery outdoor area covers all areas of learning, with a strong emphasis on the garden, where children plant and tend vegetables, and then use them for cooking. Neither outdoor provision, however, is effective enough in challenging children deeply, especially in literacy and numeracy.
- One of the Reception classrooms provides a very stimulating learning environment that grabs children's interests, such as through the 'super heroes writing den' and a well-resourced reading area. This encourages children to choose to write and to read. The indoor Nursery classroom is equally well resourced and planned to stimulate children's interest and enable them to learn well, including in reading and writing. In the other Reception classroom, the environment is less stimulating and is less effective in stimulating children's curiosity.
- In 2017, disadvantaged pupils in Year 6, who made up almost half of the cohort, made less progress and attained lower standards than their peers and other pupils nationally. I discussed with leaders how they are diminishing these differences for current disadvantaged pupils.
- Leaders, including governors, identified that the historical strategies supported by the pupil premium funding had not been effective enough to diminish differences. The leader with responsibility for the pupil premium analysed last year's outcomes. Typically, one in four eligible pupils in key stage 2 had joined the school during that stage. This group in particular had underachieved last year. In the leader's discussions with pupils and staff, it emerged that typically pupils took time to settle down and make new friends. In some cases, the school's common terminology was different to that used in their previous schools, and this caused confusion and lack of understanding in lessons. It took too long for teachers to receive data on the pupils' prior attainment, and because of the way pupils initially presented, the teachers' expectations of pupils were too low. Further, several late joiners had circumstances that made them vulnerable and this had had a negative impact on their learning. Leaders have put in place strategies to deal with all of these barriers. In addition, for the first two terms this year, the leader responsible for the pupil premium mentored every late joiner once a fortnight.
- My visits to some classes, discussions with disadvantaged pupils and book sampling across year groups support the school's view that eligible pupils, including late joiners, are now making good progress overall. Nevertheless, leaders are not complacent and want to find more ways of helping all disadvantaged pupils make even more progress and catch up with other pupils nationally. Leaders have therefore commissioned a detailed external review of pupil premium spending, which is due to take place shortly.

- I considered how leaders have managed to increase pupils' attendance steadily from below average in 2015 to average in 2017. Equally, I explored with leaders how they are reducing rates of persistent absence, as these have remained above national averages.
- The success in improving overall attendance has been down to leaders raising the profile of the importance of regular attendance among pupils and their parents. Leaders reward pupils and classes for good attendance. Leaders report attendance figures to parents in the newsletters and emphasise how regular attendance supports their children's successful learning. The headteacher takes personal overall responsibility for attendance, supported by a designated member of the administrative team. Since the start of this year, they have analysed and identified, on a weekly basis, those pupils whose attendance is falling. The headteacher now, at an early stage, invites parents in to discuss his concerns and works with parents to resolve any issues that are impeding their child's regular attendance. This has met with some success. Last year, the school's persistent absence figure was 9.6% against the national 8.7%. This year so far it has dropped to 7.56%.

Next steps for the school

Leaders and those responsible for governance should ensure that:

- the early years indoor provision is highly stimulating in all classes and that there are increased opportunities for broadening and deepening children's learning outdoors, especially in literacy and numeracy
- they continue their work to diminish differences so that disadvantaged pupils make the progress they need to reach similar standards to other pupils nationally.

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

David Radomsky

Ofsted Inspector

Information about the inspection

The inspector carried out the following activities during the inspection:

- meetings with senior leaders, the leaders of literacy and mathematics and of attendance as well as the chair of the governing body and four other governors

- a telephone call with a representative of the local authority
- joint visits to classrooms and the early years provision with senior leaders and a scrutiny of pupils' work with subject leaders
- scrutiny of a range of documentation, including information about outcomes for groups of pupils, policy documentation, attendance records and information about safeguarding
- consideration of the 105 responses to Ofsted's online survey Parent View and the 15 responses to Ofsted's questionnaire for staff.