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Mrs Jayne Currant
Headteacher
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Dear Mrs Currant

Short inspection of Broom Barns Primary School

Following my visit to the school on 6 February 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 May 2014.

This school continues to be good.

You and your leadership team have maintained the good quality of education in the school since the last inspection. Since your appointment, you have developed a strong, caring team, whose members share your ethos of creating an inclusive school. Staff responding to Ofsted's online staff survey were universally positive about the school. In recent years, despite low starting points, pupils have achieved exceptionally well at the end of key stage 2. This is a significant strength of the school. You are rightly proud of Broom Barns' achievements and your determination to make the education at the school even better is shared by your staff and governors.

You have worked hard to develop links with parents and carers and the local community. As a result, the school is now popular within the local community, as reflected by the high number of applications for school places. Leaders have improved communication with parents. Consequently, parents are very positive about all aspects of the school in their responses to Parent View, Ofsted's online survey. A very large majority of parents would recommend Broom Barns Primary.

Pupils behave exceptionally well and their attitudes to learning are a credit to the school. They enjoy 'finding out fascinating facts' through a range of subjects, particularly mathematics, where they 'go on adventures with numbers'. Pupils feel valued and included in school life. A display in the school hall celebrates different pupil heritages which helps pupils understand different cultures. Pupils develop kindness and consideration for those less fortunate. For example, the school council

regularly arranges fundraising activities such as the 'Broom Barns got talent show'.

You and your leadership team have dealt effectively with the areas for improvement identified in the previous inspection report. As a result of providing a range of cross-curricular opportunities for boys to engage with writing, in 2017, boys' writing improved and was above the national average at the end of key stage 2.

You have ensured the high quality of teaching and learning through rigorous monitoring and continual professional development. Teachers' expectations of the quality of work that pupils produce are now much higher and pupils strive to respond to them.

By using pupil progress data effectively and the priorities from the last inspection, you have an accurate understanding of the school's strengths and areas for continued improvement. You acknowledge that you can do more to increase the number of children in early years reaching a good level of development. You also agree that pupils in key stage 1 could achieve better in reading. You rightly identify that differences remain in the achievement of disadvantaged pupils compared with that of other pupils nationally who have similar starting points. Pupils' attendance has improved but you agree that this improvement needs to continue.

Governors are highly committed and fulfil their responsibilities effectively. They share your high expectations for pupils and know the school well, including its strengths and areas for development. The governors work with you to monitor and evaluate the impact of improvement actions. They are fully involved in deciding the school's next steps. The school has strengthened leadership by investing in specific training to further develop senior and middle leaders. This has assisted them in their work to drive improvements, particularly in early years and English.

Safeguarding is effective.

Leaders, including governors, have ensured that all safeguarding arrangements are fit for purpose. Leaders with responsibility for safeguarding undertake appropriate training. They ensure that staff receive regular training in safeguarding to enable them to follow the school's procedures. The school's records are detailed and maintained well. They show where there has been involvement of support agencies, with actions followed up in a timely way. Pupils told me that they always feel safe in school and know that they have adults in school who will listen and help. Pupils have a good understanding of bullying. E-safety is promoted well throughout the school, which ensures that pupils know how to stay safe online. Parents who responded to Ofsted's online questionnaire, Parent View, agreed that their children are kept safe.

Inspection findings

- To ascertain that the school remained good, one of my key lines of enquiry was about the progress of children in early years. In recent years, children have achieved results that are below average, particularly in reading and writing. You

and your staff share the vision that 'early years builds the foundations for the rest of the school' and recognise the importance of preparing children for the demands of Year 1. You and your leadership team have improved the provision by appointing a strong leader who has increased expectations and supported the development of the early years team.

- Having identified communication and language as a barrier to learning, you have ensured that staff focus on developing children's language skills through well-structured activities. As a result of specific training, the staff confidently model and scaffold the children's responses. This has led to an improvement in language skills.
- You and your leadership team have redesigned the curriculum to capture children's interests and provide more opportunities for reading and writing. For example, you have restructured the outside area, affording children opportunities to practise mark making and develop their phonics skills through exciting activities. During the inspection, I observed the children enjoying writing letters with mops and water to practise their skills. In addition, children develop a range of motor skills, resulting in a marked improvement in the proportion of children achieving the expected level in physical development in 2017.
- You recognise the importance of working with parents and have actively encouraged parents into school to support their child's learning. An increasing number of parents attend the regular 'stay and play' sessions and a large proportion of parents respond to their children's learning in the children's learning journals.
- You have introduced rigorous and robust tracking of children's progress in the early years. This is helping to ensure that children catch up more quickly because they are given additional help and support earlier where necessary.
- Children now make good progress at Broom Barns from often very low starting points. In 2017, the proportion of children achieving a good level of development at the end of early years increased. You and your leadership team are ambitious for the academic and social success of children in early years. You have firm plans in place to continue to improve the early years provision. These include further development of the outside area and improvements to support the transition into year 1.
- My second line of enquiry was about how leaders are improving pupils' outcomes at key stage 1. At the end of key stage 1, pupils' achievements in reading and writing were below average in 2017. Reading attainment has been well below average for the past two years. You have taken effective action by improving the quality of phonics teaching. As a result, outcomes for Year 1 pupils in the phonics screening check increased and were in line with the national average in 2017. The proportion of pupils reaching the higher standard in reading and writing at the end of key stage 1, in 2017, was above average.
- You have ensured that all staff have high expectations of pupils in reading and writing through rigorous and robust tracking of pupils' progress. You have raised the profile of pupils' successes through celebrations such as displays in the school. The library has been reorganised and new books have been purchased to increase pupils' enjoyment of reading. As a result, pupils read more widely and

often. Teachers use books innovatively to support the development of pupils' writing skills, such as the work seen during my visit using the book 'Traction Man' to generate adjectives about different characters. Pupils have many opportunities to write across the curriculum and to complete extended pieces of writing. Most pupils talk positively about reading and writing. Pupils told me about different authors and commented on how books help you 'have new ideas for your own writing' and how they 'increase your vocabulary'. Pupils' comprehension skills have improved due to daily small group reading. However, the school is not providing pupils with enough opportunities to develop their comprehension skills quickly enough.

- My third line of enquiry focused on the progress of disadvantaged pupils. While disadvantaged pupils performed well in 2017, they have achieved less well in previous years than non-disadvantaged pupils in school and nationally. Current school information shows some disadvantaged pupils are not making as much progress as they could. You acknowledge that more work needs to be done and have identified where this is the case. However, you have a good understanding of the barriers to learning that these pupils face. Using this information, you have planned support that is well matched to enable these pupils to catch up quickly. This includes bespoke support groups with an additional teacher, the 'breakfast booster club' for revision and the family support worker to help pupils in need of emotional support.
- My final line of enquiry was to evaluate how effectively leaders have improved attendance. While attendance has been increasing steadily over recent years, persistent absence increased to above the national average in 2017. Current attendance rates are similar to this time last year, although there have been fluctuations in the attendance of some groups of pupils. You have continued to work with parents to ensure that they are aware of the importance of regular attendance at school. Rigorous monitoring procedures are in place, which has enabled you to identify issues which prevent some pupils attending well. Should the need arise, support is put in place not only for pupils, but also for families. Improvements in attendance have been made for each pupil receiving the support.

Next steps for the school

Leaders and those responsible for governance should ensure that:

- the proportion of children achieving a good level of development at the end of early years continues to increase
- pupils in key stage 1 have enough opportunities to develop their comprehension skills so a higher proportion can achieve the expected standard
- differences continue to diminish between disadvantaged pupils and other pupils nationally who have similar starting points in both their standards of attainment and rates of progress made in their learning across the curriculum
- parents and pupils understand the link between exemplary attendance and academic achievement.

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

Yours sincerely

Rachel Welch
Ofsted Inspector

Information about the inspection

- I met with you and other members of your senior team to discuss progress since the previous inspection and to agree the key lines of enquiry for the inspection.
- I also met with a group of governors, including the chair, and a representative from the local authority as well as the school council.
- I scrutinised a variety of sources of information, including your self-evaluation, the plans for improvement and assessment information for all year groups.
- I also examined the school's safeguarding and child protection procedures, the records of checks leaders make on the suitability of staff to work with children and information regarding attendance.
- We visited lessons and looked at books in all classes across the school and I listened to pupils read.
- I also looked at 80 responses to the online questionnaire, Parent View, and 29 staff survey returns.