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Mr Stewart Marsden
Headteacher
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Dear Mr Marsden

Short inspection of Battling Brook Primary School

Following my visit to the school on 3 October 2018 with Peter Strauss, 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 December 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 and your deputy headteacher have an accurate understanding of the strengths and weaknesses of this happy and thriving school. Children are clearly placed at the centre of leaders' thinking. An example of this can be seen in the imaginative design of the school building. Children are enticed into learning by features such as the 'castle walls' surrounding the library, the Roman columns and facades in the hall and classroom themes such as 'Harry Potter', complete with platform number and luggage trolley. They remain engaged by the broad and rich curriculum, which includes planning for 'memorable experiences'. Pupils told me they enjoy their learning. Parents and carers overwhelmingly agree. From the smiles at the gate to the comments made on Parent View, Ofsted's online survey, it is clear that parents are happy to send their children to your school.

The school aims are more than words on a page. They are well known and enacted by the pupils. For example, pupils are adamant that there is no discriminatory name-calling. When asked, one pupil said, 'It is offensive. It breaks our school aims. We respect everyone.' During this inspection, pupils were polite, friendly and cooperative.

Since the last inspection, leaders and staff have worked together to address the two areas identified for improvement. In 2014, you were challenged to raise the standard of pupils' writing. You and your team have been successful in doing this. Pupils' progress in writing is now in line with the national average, although leaders remain ambitious for still better progress. You were also charged with ensuring that

teachers have high expectations of what pupils at all levels of ability can achieve. There has been progress made on this but there is still more to do. Not enough pupils reach the higher standards in reading, writing and mathematics by the end of key stage 2.

Overall, standards have risen by the end of key stage 2, but there is inconsistency between year groups. For example, the percentage of children reaching a good level of development by the end of the early years improved in 2018, but the percentage reaching expected standards at the end of Year 2 fell. This followed their difficulties in the phonics test in 2017. Standards reached by disadvantaged pupils have risen, but are still below the standards achieved by pupils who are not disadvantaged. Progress in mathematics by the end of Year 6 improved, but still lags behind progress in reading and writing.

Safeguarding is effective.

Leaders have ensured that all safeguarding arrangements are fit for purpose. There is a strong culture throughout the school which places great importance on the welfare, safety and happiness of the pupils. Care for pupils' welfare is well organised and extends to support for parents on occasion. This is appreciated by the families you serve. As the school's designated safeguarding officer, you have ensured that there are secure records of work with other agencies to keep children safe. Records show that staff are trained to understand how to report any concerns and they are confident to do so. Leaders have provided a written update to staff on the recent changes to statutory guidance and will check staff knowledge and understanding shortly. You are in the process of revising the school safeguarding policy so that it is fully compliant with the new guidance. Recruitment procedures are secure.

Inspection findings

- In the recent past, not enough pupils reached the highest standards in reading, writing and mathematics at the end of key stage 2. The results from the tests for reading and mathematics in 2018 show some improvement. However, the percentage of pupils reaching high standards in writing was still below average. Visits to lessons gave some evidence that teachers are providing suitable challenge for the most able pupils. More-able children in Reception were moved on from blending sounds and letters to word-building. Effective teacher questioning in key stage 1 encouraged pupils to think for themselves. By the end of key stage 2, pupils were grappling with complex word problems in addition and subtraction. Nevertheless, expectations for handwriting are inconsistent and some of the resources seen in use during this inspection did not fully challenge the most able pupils. Building upon the emerging strengths is a next step for the school so that greater proportions of pupils reach the high standard.
- Progress in mathematics has fluctuated since 2015. School leaders identified this issue last year and have focused on improving pupils' mathematical reasoning skills. There were improvements in outcomes for Reception and Year 6 pupils in 2018. Disadvantaged pupils also performed better in 2018. During this

inspection, we saw consistent evidence in lessons and books that pupils were using and developing reasoning skills in every key stage. Pupils gave examples of how their teachers help them to understand mathematics, for example by teachers taking them outside to use physical education equipment so that they could act out adding and subtracting negative numbers. However, pupils in different classes in the same year group are not always being taught the same full range of knowledge and skills. There was evidence that some of the older disadvantaged pupils lacked the knowledge and fluency that they need. Leaders have not yet ensured that all groups of pupils are provided with the opportunity to reach the highest standards in their mathematics.

- Leaders' identification of the school's strengths and weaknesses is accurate. They monitor the work of the school by, for example, discussing the progress of each pupil with class teachers at regular pupil progress meetings. Areas for improvement are clearly linked to monitoring activities and to appraisal targets for teachers and teaching assistants. Teachers know that they are held to account for their pupils' progress. They view this positively.
- Although senior leaders recognise that the proportion of pupils who reach high standards is too small, this area for improvement is not included in the school improvement plan. Improvement planning also lacks measurable success criteria or milestones. These omissions make it difficult for governors easily to monitor the impact of the actions being taken to implement the improvement plan, and to hold leaders to account. No evidence was seen of challenge from governors to leaders about the progress of any plan, although governors' regular visits demonstrate their interest and commitment. In summary, plans do not ensure that improvement happens quickly enough.

Next steps for the school

Leaders and those responsible for governance should ensure that:

- a greater proportion of pupils reach the highest standards by the end of Year 6 in reading, writing and mathematics
- pupils' progress in mathematics is at least in line with the national average
- school improvement planning identifies the main priorities for improvement and ensures that governors can monitor progress against milestones and measurable success criteria.

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

Yours sincerely

Joanne Ward
Ofsted Inspector

Information about the inspection

Inspectors considered information from a range of sources, including the previous inspection report and information about the school's past performance. We also reviewed the school's website and read its published policies. We spoke with parents as they brought their children to school and also considered the 37 responses to Parent View, Ofsted's online survey. We read the responses to other Ofsted surveys from 30 staff and 16 pupils. Meetings were held with senior leaders and governors to discuss the school's progress since the last inspection.

We considered a range of documentation, including the school's improvement plan, information about pupils' attainment and progress, the single central record of the checks on staff and volunteers, a sample of recruitment files, the safeguarding policy and records of actions taken to protect pupils' welfare. We looked at records of staff training to ensure that they were up to date and talked to staff about how their work was checked.

We talked with staff to make sure that they knew what to do if they were concerned about a child. We made short visits to lessons, looked at the quality of work in pupils' books and spoke with pupils about their learning. We met formally with a group of pupils to hear their views. We listened to some pupils read. We observed pupils' behaviour around school, at breaktimes and in lessons.