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Mrs Kay Walsh
Headteacher
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Dear Mrs Walsh

Short inspection of Byley Primary School

Following my visit to the school on 11 July 2017, 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 September 2013.

This school continues to be good.

The leadership team has maintained the good quality of education in the school since the last inspection. Since becoming the headteacher of Byley Primary School, you have worked well with governors and staff to improve the school further. The school's motto, 'Growing together and branching out', underpins the work of the school. Your enthusiastic leadership has ensured that pupils are nurtured and well cared for. The school is a family-orientated and happy community, which has grown in size.

You are ambitious for pupils and want them to be problem solvers who will cope effectively with the challenges that life brings. You know the strengths of the school and have a clear understanding of what you need to develop further. You ensure that leadership is delegated effectively. You have taken action to redeploy staff and improve teaching and learning. Staff and teaching assistants work well together to aid pupils' learning. Staff value the opportunities that they are given to help them to improve their practice.

Governors know the school's strengths and areas for improvement. A governor commented: 'Everybody wants to get involved. All pupils' interests are met.' They have a detailed understanding of what the data on pupils' performance tells them about how well the school is doing. Governors offer effective support and challenge to leaders.

Pupils enjoy coming to school, and attendance is above the national average. Pupils are happy and interested in their work. As one pupil commented: 'Learning here is fun.' Pupils enjoy very positive relationships with staff. Pupils play sensibly and socialise well together at break and lunchtimes. They have access to a woodland area where they can explore nature. Pupils said that they feel safe and that bullying is rare. They appreciate the wide range of extra-curricular activities, such as sports, trips and residential visits.

The overwhelming majority of parents and carers who responded to Parent View, Ofsted's online questionnaire, would recommend the school to others. Parents I spoke with were extremely positive about their children's experiences. One parent commented: 'The school is just wonderful. It provides excellent care and support for my child.'

You have successfully addressed the areas for improvement identified at the last inspection. Leaders now set ambitious targets for pupils and hold teachers to account for the progress of pupils. The outdoor play area for children in the Reception class has been revamped and is now a stimulating place for children to learn, play and explore.

Pupils across the school make good progress in their learning. In 2016, the proportion of children reaching a good level of development at the end of Reception was comparable to the national average. You recognised that pupils did not make good enough progress in reading and mathematics at the end of key stage 1 in 2016. You have taken action to rectify this and pupils are now making more rapid progress. The teaching of phonics has improved. However, you acknowledge the need to improve the standards that pupils reach in mathematics. You have rightly focused on improving the standards that pupils achieve in writing. Your team's work has already led to some success. You acknowledge that there is more work to be done to ensure that the progress that pupils make in writing continues to improve.

Safeguarding is effective.

Leaders have ensured that safeguarding arrangements are fit for purpose. Records are detailed and of high quality. Leaders have created an environment in which pupils feel very safe. All staff and governors have received up-to-date safeguarding training. Staff know what to do if they have concerns. A member of the governing body carries out regular safeguarding reviews. Leaders maintain good communication with parents and external agencies to ensure the safety and well-being of pupils. Comprehensive risk assessments are in place for activities.

The overwhelming majority of parents and carers who responded to Parent View, Ofsted's online questionnaire, feel that pupils are safe, well behaved and well cared for. Pupils have been taught effectively about how to keep themselves safe when they are online.

Inspection findings

- Low numbers of pupils within year groups mean that comparisons with national averages must be treated with caution.
- You had already identified that some pupils had not reached the expected standard in the phonics screening check at the end of Year 1 in 2016. This was related to the quality of teaching in this area, which has now improved. Phonics is taught regularly, accurately and in an engaging way. Inspection evidence indicates that the percentage of Year 1 pupils who reach the expected standard in the phonics screening check will be above the national average this year.
- In 2016, pupils did not make enough progress in reading and mathematics at the end of key stage 1. You have introduced a range of initiatives to improve pupils' progress. You have rightly invested in high-quality books for the school library, to encourage pupils to read books frequently and develop a love of reading. Pupils who read to me used their phonic knowledge well to work out difficult and unfamiliar words. Weaker readers receive individual support from adults. Records show that pupils read regularly, including at home. Communication between school and home is strong. Current assessment information shows that progress in reading is improving. In mathematics, pupils are given good opportunities and resources to develop their mathematics skills and understanding. However, you acknowledge that the progress made by pupils in mathematics is still not good enough.
- You recognised that, in 2016, pupils were not making enough progress in writing. You have implemented a number of strategies that are leading to better progress. You have improved ongoing training for staff and strengthened the moderation of pupils' work. Pupils write for different purposes. For example, younger pupils write letters and book reviews. Pupils also have opportunities to practise their writing skills in a wide range of subjects and develop their technical vocabulary. Examples of pupils' writing are celebrated in eye-catching displays around the school. The effective teaching of editing skills also helps pupils to complete their work to a higher standard. However, when looking at pupils' work, we noticed that, on occasions, tasks are structured in a way that prevents them from writing at length or in greater depth. You acknowledge that, while writing is improving across the school, this remains an area for further development.

Next steps for the school

Leaders and those responsible for governance should ensure that:

- the standards that pupils reach in writing continue to improve
- pupils' progress in mathematics continues to improve, so that the majority of them achieve the expected standard at the end of Year 2.

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

Yours sincerely

Ahmed Marikar
Her Majesty's Inspector

Information about the inspection

During this short inspection, I met with you and a group of middle leaders. I met with three members of the governing body. I also met with your school improvement adviser and held a telephone conversation with a representative from the local authority. I met with eight pupils from key stage 2 and spoke with others during breaktimes. I visited a number of classes, where I observed teaching and learning, looked at pupils' work and spoke with pupils. I also heard pupils from Year 2 and Year 6 read. I carried out a work scrutiny of pupils' work across the school. I spoke with parents as they dropped their children off at school. I took account of 20 responses to Parent View, the Ofsted online questionnaire, including 21 free-text responses. I also considered the views of 11 staff and 16 pupils through Ofsted's online questionnaires. I looked at a range of documentation, including the school's self-evaluation and information about pupils' attainment and progress. I evaluated safeguarding procedures, including policies to keep children safe, records of training, safeguarding checks and attendance and behaviour information. I also undertook a review of the school's website.