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Mrs Joanne Fearon
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Dear Mrs Fearon

Short inspection of Bransty Primary School

Following my visit to the school on 14 November 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 February 2013.

This school continues to be good.

The leadership team has maintained the good quality of education in the school since the last inspection. You have ensured that all staff clearly understand that they must always give the highest priority to pupils' learning and welfare. Staff willingly work hard in response to this expectation. The school roll is increasing, with more pupils joining the school in the early years and by admissions at other times. The school has responded well to the changes in its population. For example, by refining the way staff collect information about pupils' learning to take better account of pupils who only spend part of their school career at Bransty.

The school has a positive and hard-working atmosphere. Pupils work well together and are polite towards adults. They have an evident sense of pride in their school. These features do not happen by chance. Staff support and develop them in a number of ways. These include the respect staff give to pupils and the use of the school name to reinforce positive characteristics in 'Be Respectful, Approachable and honest, Nice and helpful, Smart and positive. Try your best. You are Bransty – be proud'. These aspirations are widely displayed around the school. One aspect of the high levels of respect pupils show for each other is in the way pupils who have special educational needs (SEN) and/or disabilities are included in the school. Pupils understand the need to treat everyone equally while also being aware that sometimes some people need extra help or support.

You have a good understanding of the strengths of the school and are honest in

identifying those areas which still need further work. The school improvement plan provides a detailed framework for the development of the school and you use it to make sure that planned improvements happen as expected. You keep a close eye on how well pupils are learning through school assessment and the national tests. You know that there has been some variation. For example, key stage 2 reading scores dropped in 2016. However, you ensured that this led to rapid and effective action across the school to improve reading. You know that the school could still do more to challenge pupils, including the most able, to reach the higher levels of attainment identified in national curriculum assessment.

At the previous inspection, inspectors asked the school to improve teaching. For example, by teachers expecting pupils to present their work better. The school makes sure that pupils know what is expected from the earliest stages. There is a clear focus on the early stages of writing in the Nursery. Later on, pupils may only move to using a pen once their writing in pencil is neat enough. If pupils need extra help with their handwriting, teachers provide this as part of the additional teaching offered whenever pupils appear to be falling behind. I saw pupils trying hard to present their work as neatly as possible and examples of pupils' neat written work on display around the school. Inspectors also asked teachers to extend pupils' use of their mathematical skills into other subjects. One subject which illustrates how teachers now do this is science where, for example, numerical work on weather-station data is part of pupils' experience.

Inspectors also asked you to improve the outdoor areas in early years. The outdoor areas for the Nursery and Reception classes have both been developed since the previous inspection and provide different opportunities for children to develop their early writing and mathematical skills as they play.

The parents I spoke with and those who completed Ofsted's Parent View Questionnaire were positive about the school. All would recommend the school to another parent. The responses from parents whose children have SEN and/or disabilities demonstrate their high levels of confidence in the school's work. You actively seek ways to communicate better with parents and engage them in school life, especially where they may be cautious about this. You are in the final stages of introducing a new website which also links to an app suitable for use on mobile phones. The responses from pupils and members of staff to their questionnaires were also positive.

Safeguarding is effective.

Leaders and governors ensure that safeguarding arrangements work well. They make sure that the school's child-protection policy is closely matched to the required guidance and is available to parents and others on the school's website. Record-keeping about safeguarding is thorough. You provide regular formal training for staff and keep their awareness up to date by providing information on specific aspects much more frequently. The school ensures that staff have the confidence to raise any concerns about pupils' welfare, even if these appear minor at first sight. You described to me the thorough way you follow up safeguarding concerns with

external agencies and so ensure that pupils are protected and ready to learn.

Governors are aware of their responsibility for safeguarding. For example, governors who interview potential members of staff have participated in recent training about safer recruitment.

Pupils I spoke to, as well as almost all of those pupils who responded to the Ofsted questionnaire, told me that they feel safe in the school. Those I spoke to also said that there is no bullying and talked about the external programme used by the school to help them understand the importance of behaving properly towards each other.

Inspection findings

- You build staff confidence and skills to ensure that the school can continue to improve. You have ensured that subject leaders can have more impact by allocating more time for them to complete their roles. For example, in their observation of colleagues' work and training which follows this to address any weaknesses they identify. Governors have improved their impact by changing the way they organise their meetings. The cycle of meetings now allows for planning review and monitoring of improvement each term. Governors work closely with staff to understand what the school does well and what is less effective. The school's effective responses to the areas for improvement identified at the previous inspection and to weaknesses in reading since then give confidence that the school's success will grow further.
- Year 6 pupils' progress in the national tests in reading increased significantly between 2016 and 2017. You have ensured that the improvements to teaching reading continue with a new home-learning record to encourage reading at home and the recent introduction of a computer-based system to provide weekly information about pupils' progress so that teachers can give extra help if needed. The strong upward trend in the Year 1 pupils' scores in the national screening check of phonics skills indicates that there are firm foundations for further improvements in reading. These scores are above average and increasing. Sometimes, the differences in outcomes between cohorts can be explained as a result of the different numbers of pupils who have SEN and/or disabilities or in the number of boys and girls. However, you know that some aspects of pupils' outcomes are not good enough. In particular, too few pupils reach greater depth in the national assessments at key stages 1 and 2, for example in their grammar, punctuation and spelling.
- You make sure that there is a good balance between English, mathematics and other subjects. You identified that science learning did not have a clear enough place within the broader topic-based learning of pupils and so allocated specific time for science. Pupils do well in the formal assessment of their science learning.
- Leaders and teachers work together to improve teaching. You have a systematic programme to monitor teachers' effectiveness, including formal and informal observations of teaching and learning, scrutiny of pupils' work, teachers' planning and discussion with pupils. These give you confidence that teachers are effective.

In particular, you have ensured that the levels of challenge to pupils in whole-class or group activities, or when pupils are working alone, have increased. I saw teachers encouraging pupils to think, contribute their ideas and learn well.

- Children in the early years develop well. The proportion reaching a good level of development has increased since the previous inspection and is now around the national average. School data indicates that even those pupils who do not reach this standard make rapid progress from sometimes very low starting points. Staff closely monitor and encourage the development of pupils' writing, mathematical and other skills. The layout of the school building means that, while being close, the Nursery and Reception class are separated. However, the early years leader ensures that the early years operates as a whole. The outdoor areas are used successfully to extend classroom learning. I saw Reception children thoroughly enjoying using their imaginations to build on the story of 'The three little pigs' as they played outside.
- Pupils, in general, attend school well and absence overall is at or below the national average. The published data on attendance shows that pupils who have SEN and/or disabilities sometimes have more absences than others. You have looked at this carefully and have identified that long-term absences for medical reasons have affected the figures. So far this year, attendance is slightly lower than last year. Again, you have considered the reasons for this. One factor has been some families taking holidays in term time. You work hard to encourage parents to help them help their children to make the most of school.

Next steps for the school

Leaders and those responsible for governance should ensure that:

- teachers provide even more challenging activities for pupils so that more reach greater depth in their learning and outcomes overall rise to become consistently above the national average
- staff further build on the systems for involving parents so that more parents have a close partnership with the school concerning attendance and learning.

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

Yours sincerely

David Selby
Her Majesty's Inspector

Information about the inspection

During this inspection, I had meetings to discuss the school's effectiveness with you, the deputy headteacher, the middle leaders responsible for reading and writing and the early years leader. I had discussions with a group of governors, including the chair of the governing body, with a representative of the local authority and with an external consultant who works with the school. I met with a group of pupils and talked with others around the school during lessons and break. I toured the school, accompanied by you. I observed teaching and learning in classes across the school and heard a small group of pupils read. I examined documents including information about the safeguarding of pupils, the school's self-evaluation document, the improvement plan and information about pupils' achievement. I considered 19 responses to Parent View, Ofsted's online questionnaire, including 12 additional written comments. I also reviewed a survey of parents organised by the school towards the end of the last school year. I spoke with some parents at the start of the school day. Eight members of staff and 52 pupils provided their views using their Ofsted questionnaires.