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Ms Terri Chudleigh and Ms Nicola Coggin
Heads of School
Briscoe Primary School and Nursery Academy
Felmores End
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Dear Ms Chudleigh and Ms Coggin

Short inspection of Briscoe Primary School and Nursery Academy

Following my visit to the school on 20 March 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 July 2014

This school continues to be good.

The leadership team has maintained the good quality of education in the school since the previous inspection. Since the previous inspection, there have been significant changes in leadership and some instability within the teaching staff which has hampered the speed of improvement of pupils' outcomes. However, support from Hearts Academy Trust has strengthened the leadership of the school with your recent appointments as heads of school, and, furthermore, improved stability within your teaching staff.

Your strong transition arrangements from pre-school to early years and transition into key stage 1 have helped strengthen the foundations of the school. Your strategies for raising pupils' achievement are firmly linked to early identification of the different needs of your pupils. In addition, your actions to close the gaps in pupils' knowledge and understanding in key stage 2 have led to improved standards in reading, writing and mathematics.

Parents are overwhelmingly supportive and all who responded to Parent View, Ofsted's online questionnaire, say that the school is well led and managed and they would recommend this school to other parents. One parent commented: 'My child loves coming to Briscoe, they do so many extra activities... I feel so supported as a parent and the staff are all welcoming and friendly.' Another added: 'My child has made great progress with reading, writing and speaking since he started at this school. The staff are great, easy to talk to and approachable.'

Parents I spoke with agree that Briscoe Primary School is a nurturing environment. Pupils are polite and happy and have an enthusiasm for learning. All teachers set high expectations of behaviour, as demonstrated in pupils' positive attitudes to learning in lessons. High expectations from teachers are seen in the good-quality examples of pupils' work, particularly in writing in key stage 2.

Although there are recognised challenges for pupils with complex and social and emotional needs, the nurture and support in place for them ensures that teaching and learning are inclusive. Teachers and additional adults support pupils well so that they can access the curriculum and make good progress in their learning. The school's own information shows that the attainment gap is diminishing over time between disadvantaged pupils and other pupils nationally. Pupils' work demonstrates that current disadvantaged pupils and those who have special educational needs and/or disabilities are making good progress.

You value the support that the trust provides to the school. The trust's directors of learning have made a significant contribution to improving the consistency in the quality of teaching and learning across all year groups. From the early years to Year 6, there is a school-wide focus on priorities for raising achievement in reading, writing and mathematics. Your enthusiastic, and now established, teaching team receives precise professional development and demonstrates good subject knowledge and skills. Teachers share their good practice across the schools in the trust.

You both recognise that there is now an opportunity to strengthen school leadership by supporting your experienced teachers further into developing their middle leadership roles.

Your work towards areas for improvement, highlighted in the previous inspection, can be evidenced across the school. For example, one area for development was to raise achievement, particularly for boys and those who join partway through the school year. You have ensured that there are induction processes in place to support new starters. These pupils and boys are tracked separately by leaders to ensure they make the progress they should. Teachers plan together with the trust leaders to provide an exciting curriculum to take account of pupils' interests, linking subjects, where possible, so that pupils can see the connections and gain a deeper understanding. Corridors are adorned with pupils' good-quality art and topic work, and the quality of pupils' writing is good across a range of subjects. In addition, the boys I heard read were enthusiastic about their books and their learning and, as a result, the gap between boys' and girls' attainment is closing as they make good progress across the curriculum.

Teachers use a variety of ways to ensure that pupils have every chance of succeeding in their learning. For example, teachers give extra support to pupils who are struggling by teaching key learning points in advance of the lesson, so that they are fully prepared for the tasks they will be tackling later.

Teachers have begun to develop their practice for recognising where pupils are in their learning during lessons by checking their work and giving support, so that they can rectify or improve on their work immediately. However, you and your leaders recognise that teachers' assessments of pupils' learning can be developed and improved further. All teachers need to take more account of pupils' starting points, so that activities are planned precisely to enable more pupils to make accelerated progress and reach the higher standards of attainment.

Safeguarding is effective.

You have ensured that safeguarding arrangements are fit for purpose. Checks on all employees' suitability to work with children are complete, and records of concern are organised chronologically and actions are timely.

Behaviour logs show that behaviour has improved over time and no recent serious incidents have been recorded. Pupils' well-being is given a high priority within the school. Pupils who I spoke with told me they feel safe at school and all staff who completed Ofsted's online staff survey agree pupils are safe. You work well with external agencies to help improve the lives of your vulnerable pupils and families. You were able to share many success stories and provide evidence to demonstrate that engagement with parents and pupils' attendance have improved over time. There has also been a reduction in persistent absence.

Inspection findings

- You have quite rightly prioritised reading and mathematics as areas to improve throughout the school. Published data indicated that attainment was in the bottom 20% of all schools nationally for the last two years and additionally, while there was some improvement in mathematics in 2016, progress for reading and mathematics was also in the bottom 30% at the end of key stage 2 in 2017.
- Children enter Reception typically with quite low starting points, particularly in their development of communication and language. Teachers focus on developing children's phonics and language skills, ensuring that children have opportunities to hear the spoken word correctly and apply what they have learned regularly in reading and writing activities. This has ensured that children make good progress from their different starting points. The good progress extends into Year 1 as demonstrated in the higher than national number of pupils meeting expected standards in the phonics screening check in 2017.
- You have promoted the importance of reading throughout the school community and pupils told me they love reading. Pupils I listened to read were able to use their phonics knowledge to read unfamiliar words. They read with expression from books that provided appropriate challenge and enjoyment. They were able to tell me that to be a good reader, 'you need to read fluently, accurately, with expression and use the punctuation'.
- Strategies are in place to support pupils to be confident at expressing themselves accurately, using correct grammar and a range of rich vocabulary. Classroom environments have relevant vocabulary displayed that is used in the teaching and

learning of a range of subjects. In Reception, for example, tricky words are on display, easily accessible by children. Evidence in children's work shows that they use them well in their sentence work.

- In key stage 2, examples of exciting and rich vocabulary are written on working walls, and word banks in pupils' books support topic work and extended writing activities.
- Teachers ensure that pupils understand what they are about to read by identifying words which they may never have heard before. In a lesson in Year 5, for example, the teacher highlighted words such as 'twilight', 'dappled' and 'gliding' from a poem pupils were studying. They were given visual examples in different contexts so that they were thoroughly able to understand the meaning. As a result, pupils increased their vocabulary knowledge and confidence which extended to them producing writing of a good standard.
- Your monitoring and tracking information for reading, and evidence from inspection activities, indicates that more pupils are on track to meet the expected standard in the phonics screening check and to meet expected and higher standards at the end of key stages 1 and 2 by the end of this academic year.
- The teaching of mathematics is consistent across the school. The school's chosen approach supports pupils to understand difficult ideas using pictures and practical activities. Again, the strong focus on vocabulary supports pupils with their verbal reasoning and explanation skills, which help them to reach the higher standards of attainment. Pupils demonstrated confidence in class and used talking partners to test out their ideas. They offered their reasoning verbally to the class and the teacher supported them to phrase their explanations correctly. Pupils' books show that formal methods of calculations are taught and pupils are able to apply them to problem-solving activities.
- It is evident that the strong focus on developing language and vocabulary has had a positive impact on raising standards in reading, writing and mathematics across the school. Discussions with leaders, teachers and pupils, and pupils' work across the school, indicate that attainment and progress should improve again this year. More pupils are likely to reach expected and higher standards by the end of key stages 1 and 2. As a result, more pupils should be ready for their next stage in learning.

Next steps for the school

Leaders and those responsible for governance should ensure that:

- the skills of middle leaders are further developed so that they make a strong contribution to raising standards in English and mathematics across the school
- teachers use what they know about pupils' starting points in each lesson to ensure that progress is accelerated further and more pupils reach the expected and higher standards of attainment in reading, writing and mathematics.

I am copying this letter to the chief executive officer of the multi-academy trust, the regional schools commissioner and the director of children's services for Essex. This letter will be published on the Ofsted website.

Yours sincerely

Cindy Impey
Her Majesty's Inspector

Information about the inspection

We discussed the key lines of enquiry for this inspection, areas for further improvement and information about current pupils' attainment and progress. I visited all year groups and held meetings with you, senior leaders and the executive headteacher, directors of learning and members of the local advisory board. I listened to pupils read and spoke with pupils informally. I also spoke with a number of parents at the beginning of the school day. Policies and procedures for safeguarding of pupils were examined. I gathered a range of evidence to evaluate the quality of teaching, learning and assessment. This included joint meetings with you, your leaders and trust leaders. I looked at a range of pupils' work from across all year groups, subjects and a wide range of pupil abilities. The views of 115 parents who responded to Ofsted's online questionnaire, Parent View, were taken into account, as well as 11 responses which parents made using the free-text service. The eight responses to Ofsted's online staff survey were also considered to obtain staff views.