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Mrs C McIntosh
Headteacher
Brierley Primary School
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Dear Mrs McIntosh

Short inspection of Brierley Primary School

Following my visit to the school on 12 September 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 January 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 ensure that every child is valued right across the school and you have high aspirations for all of your pupils. In my discussions with staff, parents and pupils, they all commented positively on the quality of your leadership. This is because you are committed to high-quality care and to providing the best possible experience for pupils.

The clear vision of you and your governors has resulted in the school being in a stronger position than it was at the time of the previous inspection and without doubt it continues to improve. Your strong leadership has ensured stability for pupils, despite extensive building work and the large number of staff who are new to the school. Governors know the school and its community well. They have a good understanding of the minor weaknesses that remain and leaders' plans to remedy them. You have also focused on the professional development of your staff and consequently there is good capacity to improve the school further.

The majority of responses to Parent View were positive. The parents who spoke to me were very supportive of your leadership and the efforts made by staff to put the school at the heart of the community. They also acknowledged that the school has improved over recent years and that staff are approachable and deal well with any concerns raised. They feel that communication is good and that children enjoy coming to school.

Staff are also passionate about their role in the school. They believe in every child and they provide a wide and rich curriculum for pupils. In particular, physical education (PE)

provision is strong, as is the provision for pupils who speak English as an additional language. This is because every child is valued and supported to achieve well and make good progress across the curriculum.

Across the school, pupils are polite, well behaved and engage in every aspect of their learning. They also feel part of the Brierley school 'family'. They are proud of their school and they feel that every member of staff has their best interests at heart. One pupil commented, 'If a new pupil joins our school from another country they become part of the Brierley family.'

The previous inspection identified the need to continue to raise pupils' attainment in English and mathematics. You were also tasked to improve teaching by ensuring that pupils are challenged to achieve the levels of which they are capable. In addition, you were asked to ensure that tasks match pupils' needs. You have focused on improving the quality of teaching, learning and assessment over the last four years. New methods of assessment and high-quality training have resulted in better outcomes for pupils, especially in mathematics. Pupils are now more routinely challenged to achieve well and mostly teachers plan tasks that match pupils' needs.

You do, however, acknowledge that some teaching does not develop language and communication skills well enough and that this slows pupils' progress in writing. You also acknowledge that, while there is some good practice in meeting the needs of the most able in reading and writing, this is not consistent in all year groups, especially in key stage 1.

Safeguarding is effective.

There is a strong culture of safeguarding throughout the school. You know your families well and you work effectively with outside agencies to ensure that the most vulnerable families and pupils are safe. Records are of a high quality and there are systems in place to check the suitability of staff to work with children. There are also regular checks of these systems by senior staff and governors.

You teach safeguarding effectively throughout the curriculum. Pupils know about fire safety, water safety and how to keep safe online. Work has also been completed on rail safety because of the heightened risk in the locality.

Inspection findings

- The inspection focused on a number of areas. First, we considered the actions taken by leaders to improve outcomes for pupils in key stage 1. In 2016, pupils' attainment at key stage 1 was below the national average. Although this has remained the case in 2017, there have been significant improvements in reading and writing and the progress from pupils' starting points is strong. More pupils are also achieving greater depth in reading than has previously been the case. Progress is also evident from work in pupils' books and from your own assessments of pupils' learning. Pupils' success is the result of the effective training of teachers and other adults in teaching reading. Teachers' use of questioning has also improved. There is equally a more consistent

approach to the teaching of phonics. The pupil premium funding has been used to provide extra sessions for disadvantaged pupils that focus on language and communication. However, this area still requires further improvement. We agreed that teachers do not always set work which matches the needs of the most able. We also agreed that teachers do not sufficiently develop pupils' language and communication skills.

- The second area of focus was to consider your actions to accelerate children's progress in the early years to improve their outcomes. The recent acquisition of the on-site Nursery has helped to provide a good start for children and this is having a positive effect on outcomes for children who attend the provision. It has improved the transition between Nursery and Reception. Children know the expectations that staff have of them on entering Reception and staff have a good understanding of children's needs. As a result, the number of children who reach a good level of development by the end of Reception continues to improve and is almost in line with the national average. Progress is strong from children's starting points, as is evident in children's work and from your own assessment information. This shows that children in the early years make good progress, with the pupil premium funding being used increasingly effectively to support communication and language development for those who need it. Leaders in the early years are raising expectations and implementing new, successful strategies for children who speak English as an additional language.
- The third area we considered was your provision to meet the needs of the most able pupils, especially in attaining greater depth in reading and writing. In tackling this issue, you have revised the whole school curriculum and raised the expectations of your staff. You have also been successful in enabling pupils to be more aspirational. The teaching of reading is consistently good across the school and texts are now chosen to engage and improve the learning of the most able. A new reading initiative has also been implemented to make a wider variety of books available to pupils. Reading now has a much higher priority than in previous years. Your assessment information and work in pupils' books show that more pupils, including disadvantaged pupils, are now achieving greater depth at key stage 1. The same can be said for the more able pupils in key stage 2. Successful work with pupils who speak English as an additional language has improved the progress of the most able of these pupils too. We did, however, agree that the recent strategies for improving communication and language need to be continued and assessed regularly to measure the impact on pupils' progress more closely.

Next steps for the school

Leaders and those responsible for governance should ensure that they:

- continue to embed the new strategies for improving communication and language throughout the school to improve outcomes in writing further
- share the strong practice seen in some year groups across the school to raise outcomes for the most able pupils in reading and writing further
- ensure that the tasks set for the most able pupils are always well matched to pupils' abilities in key stage 1.

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 East. This letter will be published on the Ofsted website.

Yours sincerely

Simon Hunter
Her Majesty's Inspector

Information about the inspection

Throughout the inspection I spoke with pupils, both formally and informally, about their work and school life. I also met with you, your deputy headteacher, the early years leader and several middle leaders. I conducted a scrutiny of pupils' work. I spoke to the local-authority representative for Cheshire East. I also reviewed documentation which included the monitoring of teaching and learning, staff appraisal documents, the school's evaluation of its strengths and weaknesses and the school's development plan. I considered 12 responses to Ofsted's online survey, Parent View and 17 responses to Ofsted's staff questionnaire. During the inspection, I visited classes with you to observe pupils' learning. I met with governors to discuss aspects of school leadership and management. I reviewed a range of documentation about safeguarding, including the school's record of checks undertaken on newly appointed staff. I also looked at the school's logs of behaviour and bullying incidents.