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Dear Miss Brown

Short inspection of Brookside Primary School, Oadby

Following my visit to the school on 26 October 2016, 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 2011.

This school continues to be good.

The leadership team has maintained the good quality of education in the school since the last inspection.

Although you have only been in post for a year, you have successfully created a culture where everyone is valued and listened to. You enjoy the full support of your staff and governors. Staff appreciate the opportunities you offer for their professional development. They recognise that this is improving their practice. You have implemented several improvements over the past 12 months, including to the school building and grounds, which have enhanced the learning environment for pupils and staff alike.

Currently, pupils leave Brookside at the end of Year 5. Plans are afoot for pupils in Year 6 to attend your school from September 2017. You and your governors are already making plans so that both the school building and the staff are prepared well for this change in age range. You and your governors are mindful that this development must enhance opportunities at the school and not detract from the good-quality provision that is already in place.

Around the school, pupils' work is celebrated at every turn, with attractive displays of artwork, mathematical and scientific investigations and a particularly eye-catching display in the school's entrance, celebrating Diwali.

At the school's last inspection, inspectors identified that the leaders needed to improve the attendance of pupils, and to raise pupils' attainment by further closing the gap in attainment between boys and girls. Since then, leaders have successfully improved pupils' rates of attendance year on year. Attendance is now above national averages for primary schools. Attendance is celebrated every week in assembly. Parents are informed of their child's rate of attendance at parents' evenings and the school's parent liaison officer has supported parents whose children have had low attendance. Similarly, school assessment information shows that pupils' attainment has risen and the gap between boys and girls has narrowed. This is because school leaders have focused on providing additional support for the most able pupils and ensured that all teachers give high priority to closely checking pupils' progress. Never complacent, you and your leaders noted that the gap between boys' and girls' attainment widened slightly again in 2016. You astutely identified the precise reasons for the gap and have already implemented strategies to address this.

The school's curriculum is enhanced by trips, including residential visits, designed to broaden pupils' experiences and to bring learning to life. Pupils say that they enjoy these opportunities. Pupils' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development is promoted well. Pupils can learn to play a musical instrument and take part in sporting events, such as cross-country running. Pupils have a good understanding of British values, such as the rule of law through learning about school rules, and democracy through voting for classmates to represent them on the school council or eco council.

Brookside is a highly inclusive school. 'Riverbank' is a 20-place class for pupils who have special educational needs and/or disabilities. Pupils who attend Riverbank are integrated successfully into the life of the school. Many pupils join with mainstream classes when it is appropriate for their learning, ably supported by staff they are familiar with. Very occasionally, if it is appropriate for them, pupils from mainstream classes have lessons in the Riverbank class. A wide range of faiths and cultures are represented in the school. It is not uncommon for pupils who are new to England or new to speaking English to attend Brookside Primary School. Parents told me that they are made very welcome in school. Pupils appreciate and enjoy learning about each other's faiths and ways of life. They told me, 'It makes our school better because we get to know each other better. Everyone is equal. We respect all religions here.'

The vast majority of parents who responded to the online survey, Parent View, would recommend the school. Every parent who spoke with me during the inspection said that, if they had a concern, they could approach the school with the confidence that someone would help them. They spoke very highly of the family learning that leaders have organised. Family learning sessions are held each year for parents of almost every year group. They are well attended. Parents told me that they have learned how to support their children with their learning; for example, with their reading or mathematics. Parents appreciate that family learning sessions have had other benefits. They told me that it has brought the community together because parents have got to know each other through the sessions.

Leaders make sure that pupils and parents who are new to speaking English are well supported. The parent liaison officer encourages parents to attend ESOL (English for speakers of other languages) courses. Several parents were keen to tell me that this helped them when they first moved to live in the area. Pupils in school who are at the early stages of speaking English are equally well supported.

Safeguarding is effective.

All the appropriate vetting checks are undertaken when staff join Brookside Primary School to ensure they are suitable to work with children. Staff have up-to-date training so they know how to raise a concern, should one arise. You ensure that all staff have read the government's most recent guidance. Governors have also received training and understand the important role they play in safeguarding. Pupils' attendance has risen since the last inspection. Staff take swift action if a pupil is absent to check why they are not in school.

Every parent who I spoke with, or who responded to the online survey, felt that their child was well looked after at the school. Pupils say that they feel very safe in school. They say that bullying is very rare, and the school's records confirm this. Pupils are confident that they have a trusted adult in school to talk to if ever they are worried about anything.

Inspection findings

- Leaders, including governors, are highly ambitious for everyone associated with the school to do well. You have a clear understanding of the school's strengths and what you would like to do to improve it further. Leaders recognised, for example, that there was scope to develop the mathematics mastery curriculum that was introduced to school last year. This is because they carefully analysed what worked well and what could be done to improve the initiative, particularly for girls. Consequently, leaders have included this in the school development plan for this year and work is already underway.
- Governors know the school well. They understand the strategic nature of their role. They provide effective support and challenge to the leadership team. Minutes of meetings show that governors ask pertinent and challenging questions of leaders. Governors visit the school to see it in action for themselves. There is a committee of governors whose remit includes ensuring that governors have the appropriate training to be able to fulfil their roles effectively.
- Since you have taken up your post as headteacher, you have strengthened the system for checking the progress that pupils make. You have ensured that teachers have received good support to be able to make accurate assessments. Senior leaders undertake regular pupil progress meetings with teachers and ensure that all groups of pupils, including those who are disadvantaged and those who have special educational needs and/or disabilities, make good progress from their different starting points. If leaders notice that a pupil is falling behind, or

that a pupil known to be among the most able could achieve even more, interventions are put in place quickly. You and your senior leaders make effective use of additional government funding for disadvantaged pupils. You make sure that the impact of the spending, including for the most able pupils, is carefully monitored.

- Subject leaders monitor the provision in their areas of responsibility by checking teachers' planning and looking at pupils' books, for example. Leaders of some subjects have begun to put in place systems to check the progress that pupils make more closely, but this is in the very early stages of development.
- As we toured the school together, we saw that pupils are keen to learn. Teachers and teaching assistants ask questions that enable pupils to deepen their understanding. For example, in a Year 5 class, as pupils studied the poem 'The Highwayman', the teaching assistant ensured that pupils considered the differences in lifestyle from the time of the poem to modern day. We also saw teachers and teaching assistants effectively developing pupils' phonics and spelling skills. Relationships between staff and pupils were strong as they laughed together, making learning fun. Teachers made links with previous lessons so that learning made sense for pupils. However, just occasionally, learning in other classes was not as effective because teachers did not make best use of resources to promote pupils' understanding, or pupils were using incorrect mathematical information, which had gone unnoticed by the teacher.
- In the Reception class, teachers were making effective use of the recently improved outdoor area to promote children's learning. Children accessed a wide range of activities designed to develop their movement and dexterity, imagination, social skills or problem-solving skills. Teachers and teaching assistants promoted learning well through gentle encouragement and appropriate questions to develop children's knowledge and understanding.
- Leaders ensure that, as children move from the Reception class to Year 1, they have opportunities to familiarise themselves with their new classroom and facilities, and to get to know the staff. Teachers hold meetings for parents so they know what to expect as their child moves into the new key stage. Teachers pass on important information about each child to their new teacher. However, observations and discussions with you during the inspection indicate that there is scope for the transition to be further improved so that learning and progress for pupils is maximised.
- Pupils' books and school assessment information show that pupils, including the most able disadvantaged pupils and those who have special educational needs and/or disabilities, make good progress from their different starting points. Pupils' books show that by the time they reach Year 5 they are writing imaginative and extended sentences. For example, one pupil had written, 'As the highwayman rode into the small inn-yard with his hand resting on the hilt of his sword, he viewed the dark corners of danger'. Pupils' mathematics books showed a similar picture of good progress.

- Pupils enjoy taking responsibility around school. Year 5 pupils help Reception children at lunchtime or take responsibility for sorting letters and taking registers to class. They told me that they enjoy helping the staff, and the responsibility teaches them to be organised. Pupils behave well. At playtimes, pupils play running games or chat together. In lessons, they listen respectfully to each other's view. The youngest children learn to take turns because teachers provide well-supervised opportunities for them to do so. Pupils move around school sensibly and settle into lessons without fuss. Quietly played piano music welcomes Reception children into the hall at lunchtime, setting the tone for a polite and social lunch. The school is a calm and purposeful place in which to learn.
- The school meets requirements on the publication of specified information on its website.

Next steps for the school

Leaders and those responsible for governance should ensure that:

- transition from the early years to Year 1 is more carefully planned so that pupils in Year 1 make the best possible progress
- subject leaders check more closely the progress that pupils make across all subjects, as they already do for English and mathematics.

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

Di Mullan
Her Majesty's Inspector

Information about the inspection

The inspection focused on a number of key lines of enquiry. These were whether:

- leaders are effectively tracking the progress of groups of pupils across Years 3 to 5 to ensure that they make good progress
- pupils attending the special unit make good progress from their different starting points
- transition from the early years to Year 1 is effectively supporting learning
- leaders, including governors, are accurately addressing areas for improvement and bringing about improvements over time
- safeguarding is effective.

During the inspection, I met with you, the deputy headteacher, the assistant headteacher and leaders of the early years, key stage 1 and the special unit. I also met with three governors, including the chair of the governing body, six members of

staff and six pupils. I heard two pupils read. I spoke with a representative of the local authority on the telephone and with parents as they brought their children to school in the morning. You and I toured the school together to see the learning that was taking place in every year group. I scrutinised the single central record and other documents relating to the safeguarding of pupils. I checked the school's website and training records. I scrutinised minutes of governors' meetings, the school's self-evaluation document, the school development plan and the school's assessment information about pupils' progress and attainment. I considered the 42 responses to the online survey, Parent View, and 16 responses to the staff questionnaire. There were no responses to the pupil questionnaire.