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Mr Stuart Perkins
Headteacher
Brimrod Community Primary School
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Dear Mr Perkins

Short inspection of Brimrod Community Primary School

Following my visit to the school on 26 March 2019, 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 November 2014.

This school continues to be good.

The leadership team has maintained the good quality of education in the school since the last inspection. Prior to your appointment in September 2016, the leadership of the school went through a period of instability. You, along with the senior leaders and governors, have brought about improvements so that the school provides pupils with a good standard of education.

You have created an accurate and detailed self-evaluation of the school, which you share on the school website. Parents and carers are kept informed about the work of the school. The school improvement plan sets out clearly how leaders will continue to bring about improvements.

Children enter the school with skills much lower than those typical for their age, and many children speak English as an additional language. You have ensured that the early years, along with the rest of the school, is a bright and stimulating learning environment. You celebrate learning well through high-quality displays and celebrations of pupils' work. Pupils are encouraged to be curious learners and they have a strong understanding of what it means to be British. Pupils are polite and well-mannered; their behaviour continues to be a strength of the school. Attendance remains higher than at other schools nationally. By the time pupils leave Year 6, they make strong progress. The progress that pupils make in reading and writing is much higher than that of other pupils nationally. Pupils are equipped with the skills and knowledge necessary to move on to the next stage of their education.

When you were first appointed, you commissioned the local authority to carry out a full review of the governing body. As a result of this review, many governors,

although very committed to the school, were found to lack the skills necessary to hold leaders to account. Now, many governors are new to their roles. They have received training to ensure that they challenge you and support you in equal measure. Governors regularly reflect on their own skills to help you to bring about even more improvements. They know the school well and have a good oversight of how additional funding ensures that disadvantaged pupils and those with special educational needs and/or disabilities (SEND) make good progress. They keep a close watch on how the sport premium fund is used to improve life chances and experiences for pupils. For example, pupils receive diverse sporting experiences that include archery, cricket, dance and cycling.

Parents hold the school in high regard. Those that I spoke to and those that responded to the Ofsted surveys were keen to express support. They said that they had no concerns about the behaviour or safety of their children in your care. Several parents stated that you and the staff had provided them with a wide range of additional support to meet their needs.

Pupils enjoy attending the school. They said that bullying and name-calling incidents were rare. Older pupils enjoy taking on a wide range of extra responsibilities. For example, they can join the school council or help in the dining hall serving the younger children. Pupils have a good understanding of democracy and British values. They know that other boys and girls come from families that may be different to their own. They know that each person should be treated with respect. Pupils have a savvy awareness of safety. They are well informed about some of the potential dangers of using the internet. Pupils enjoy the many trips and visits that enrich the curriculum. For example, during the inspection, the Year 4 pupils were involved in a residential trip to develop their outdoor and adventurous skills.

At the previous inspection, school leaders were asked to improve the quality of teaching across the school. You keep a close check on the quality of teaching and learning, ensuring that it is consistently good across the school. You provide teachers with many opportunities to develop their skills by engaging in close partnership with other teachers. They have many opportunities to plan together and observe one another teach. They reflect critically on their own practice and that of others. Teachers have many opportunities to work alongside teachers from a wide range of schools within the town. Teachers said that they found this work very effective and enjoyed the many development opportunities offered.

Inspectors also asked school leaders to improve progress and standards in reading. Leaders have invested heavily to raise the profile of reading across the school. A new school library celebrates the culture for reading. Each classroom has a dedicated reading area. You have changed the way reading is taught. This new approach you have developed encourages collaboration and exploration of skills and knowledge. Reading sessions are carefully focused and supported by trained adults. Pupils said that they enjoy taking regular online quizzes about the different books they have been reading. From an early age, the youngest pupils are taught new and unfamiliar words. Regular reading at home is encouraged. Pupils who read to the inspector had books that were well matched to their ability. Pupils were typically

clear and fluent in their reading. They were able to discuss their reading habits and works of some well-known authors.

Inspectors also asked school leaders to further develop the roles of middle leaders. Since your appointment, you have ensured that subject leaders have a more structured approach to their activities. You have worked closely with the subject leaders for mathematics and English to ensure that their work has an impact on teaching, learning and pupils' outcomes. These leaders have both had the opportunity to work alongside consultants to help them to refine and develop their roles. Leaders make careful checks on the quality of work in pupils' books. They observe the quality of teaching and learning and they talk to pupils about their work. The leader for mathematics has been successful in overseeing the implementation of a new way of teaching mathematics in the school, with a focus on reasoning and problem solving. The leader for English has been instrumental in the development of an improved reading culture and a new approach to the teaching of writing. Although other subject leaders have not had as much training, they are benefiting from the guidance of the leaders of English and mathematics. This is enabling them to have a structured approach to monitoring and leading their subjects.

Safeguarding is effective.

As the designated leader for safeguarding, you have ensured that this work is given the highest priority. Along with the safeguarding team, you have created a culture in which staff are vigilant about their responsibilities. Staff receive regular training in basic awareness of safeguarding. Staff also receive regular Prevent training to enable them to spot better potential signs of radicalisation. You work successfully with several partner agencies, such as children's social care, school health and the community police officers, to target support where it is needed.

The school's single central record is detailed. All checks on the suitability of adults who work in the school are thorough. Records of your work to safeguard pupils are detailed. You track the chronology of events carefully. You have employed the services of a family support worker to work alongside vulnerable families. Where you cannot provide support, you ensure that you signpost families to the relevant agencies.

Inspection findings

- During this inspection, I focused on three lines of enquiry. The first of these related to phonics. Phonics lessons are well planned and build on prior learning. Adults ensure that new sounds and words are taught in context. From observing teaching and learning and talking to pupils, I could see that pupils apply their phonics skills well to their reading. Leaders have successfully worked with parents to provide them with better-quality information to help them to help their children at home. For example, the school website provides a wide range of resources for parents to access. Assessment data indicates that, although the proportion of pupils who achieve the required standard in the phonics screening

check in Year 1 is lower than the national average, pupils make good progress in the early years and in Year 1.

- The second area that I focused on was the progress that pupils make in writing in key stage 1. The school has moved to a model which encourages pupils to develop their talking skills and vocabulary to improve their writing. You have worked alongside an English consultant to help develop this aspect of your work. Pupils' language skills develop and become increasingly complex. For example, in Year 1, while developing creative writing, pupils use language such as, 'I lie unnoticed in the boat.' In Year 2, language use becomes more even more focused and pupils write detailed descriptions such as, 'In the night sky, the stars sparkled brightly.' Pupils that I spoke to were able to discuss their writing and choices of vocabulary well. However, despite these improvements, pupils in key stage 1 do not have enough opportunities to develop their writing across other curriculum subjects. Evidence seen in assessment information and work in pupils' books in key stage 1 indicate that pupils' make good progress from low starting points.
- The final area that I looked at was the progress that pupils make in mathematics. You have introduced a new system to teach mathematics. You, along with the leader for mathematics, recognised that pupils' skills in problem solving and reasoning were underdeveloped. Staff have received training from a mathematics consultant to help them teach reasoning and problem solving more securely. Current assessment information indicates that all groups of pupils in the school are making good progress. The quality of work seen in pupils' books is good. The most able pupils in key stage 2 complete work that is correctly matched to their ability. Pupils cover a wide range of content in a logical sequence. They complete calculations with increasing confidence and apply their understanding to a range of content well. The progress that pupils make at the end of key stage 2 is strong; however, despite these improvements, it is not as strong as the progress pupils make in reading and writing.

Next steps for the school

Leaders and those responsible for governance should ensure that:

- pupils make better progress in mathematics, so that it is in line with the stronger progress they make in reading and writing
- pupils in key stage 1 have more opportunities to develop their writing across the curriculum.

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

Yours sincerely

John Donald
Her Majesty's Inspector

Information about the inspection

During this inspection, I met with you and the senior leadership team. I met with four members of the governing body, including the chair of governors. I met with a representative of the local authority. I met with the leaders of English and mathematics. Together we visited classes in each key stage. We viewed examples of pupils' work and spoke to them about their learning. I spoke to pupils informally at lunchtime and pupils from key stage 1 and 2 read to me.

I examined a wide range of school documentation, including the school's safeguarding documents. I examined records in relation to safeguarding and staff recruitment. I scrutinised the self-evaluation and school improvement documents. I spoke to parents before the school day and took account of the 19 responses to Parent View, Ofsted's online questionnaire. I considered the 12 free-text responses and the 18 responses to the staff survey.