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Dear Mr Smith

Short inspection of Yenton Primary School

Following my visit to the school on 7 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 November 2013.

This school continues to be good.

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

'Consistency is key' is your mantra. Since becoming acting headteacher in September 2016, you have worked with drive and determination to ensure a consistent approach to teaching and learning in order to improve outcomes for all pupils. You have high aspirations for the pupils in your care and are determined to improve the opportunities and life chances for each and every one of them. Staff and governors share this ambition for the school in equal measure.

The school has undergone a number of changes since the last inspection. Following a period of instability in the leadership, outcomes for pupils fell and behaviour deteriorated. Through the Birmingham Educational Partnership a link was made with the Robin Hood Multi-academy Trust. Governors put in place a service-level agreement enabling you to become the acting headteacher at Yenton Primary School. Together, with the ongoing support of the executive headteacher, you have brought stability and a real sense of direction to the school.

You have empowered leaders at all levels. Roles, responsibilities and expectations are made clear. Leaders are enthusiastic and keen to make a difference. You actively engage and collaborate with a range of external partners. You welcome the challenge and scrutiny they provide and use the feedback as a vehicle for

development. Your self-evaluation of the school is accurate and identifies the priorities for development. All leaders clearly know the strengths of the school. Leaders have comprehensive action plans which they use to drive further improvements. Actions are carefully monitored at regular intervals. The impact is rigorously evaluated before any additional action is taken. This measured approach is paying dividends and the impact is clear across the school. During the inspection, evidence of exemplary leadership was observed.

You are creating a strong culture of achievement. Following a dip in outcomes in the phonics screening check in 2017, you took action to improve the quality of phonics teaching. Teachers engage small groups of pupils in focused reading and writing activities. Reception children show an obvious delight when writing words, such as seed, chips and coat, independently. They know which letters make which sounds, although not all children were helped to form their letters correctly. Pupils' progress is rigorously tracked and monitored. Those not making progress are quickly identified and appropriate support provided. Additional adults provide effective support for those pupils who have special educational needs and/or disabilities. They know their pupils' needs well and provide good support. In 2017, outcomes improved in reading, writing and mathematics at the end of key stages 1 and 2. Results in writing and mathematics were in line with national averages. Pupils are beginning to make more rapid progress and reach age-related expectations. More pupils are now reaching greater depth.

You have established a rigorous cycle of coaching and staff development. This is improving the quality of teaching across the school. Staff welcome the support and challenge. They are fully committed to developing their professional skills and deepening their subject knowledge. One staff member summed up the views of many the inspector met by saying, 'We are not static. We are constantly evolving.' A robust system for induction supports staff new to the school. It helps them understand policies, procedures and expectations right from the start. This approach is highly effective in ensuring consistency across the school.

Governors value your drive and vision for improvement. Governors are clear about the impact of your actions and where improvements can be seen. They have developed their strategic role as a result of work with a national leader of governance. They use their extensive range of skills and wealth of experience to hold leaders to account. They have a clear understanding of how to carry out their statutory functions and now offer a robust challenge.

During the inspection, the behaviour of pupils was good. The school is a calm and orderly place. Pupils were polite and helpful. They cooperate well and support each other effectively in lessons. Pupils have a good focus on their learning and try hard. The majority are articulate, with well-formed ideas and opinions.

The vast majority of parents and carers are very supportive of the school and appreciate the improvements you are making. Several had chosen this school because of the positive ethos and the focus on individual children. This was despite

it not being their local school. Other parents commented on the improved quality of teaching and the good progress their child was now making.

Through your drive for greater consistency across the school, you are tackling the issues raised at the last inspection. This is despite having other key issues which needed addressing rapidly when you became headteacher. The systems and expectations introduced are having a positive effect on pupils' progress and are enabling teachers to teach more effectively.

Safeguarding is effective.

The culture of safeguarding is strong across the school. It is threaded through everything the school does. Focused weeks during the year enable pupils to develop skills in keeping themselves safe. For example, the 'smilers' week, focused on mental-health issues, supports pupils who struggle with their feelings and emotions. The use of the National Society for the Prevention of Cruelty to Children resource 'PANTS' helps pupils understand and know how to keep their body safe. The impact of these is evident as pupils talk with confidence about staying safe. The curriculum opportunities also ensure that safeguarding is central to the school's work.

The leadership team has ensured that all safeguarding arrangements are fit for purpose. The designated safeguarding leader is tenacious in following up any concerns. Highly effective recording systems now ensure that a comprehensive picture is built up. This ensures that timely action is taken. Strong links are in place with external agencies, which enables vulnerable children and their families to receive appropriate help. All staff are clear about their responsibilities and remain vigilant. This is a result of regular training opportunities. Governors monitor the effectiveness of all child protection policies and procedures. As a result, 94% of parents say their child is safe at school.

Inspection findings

- My first focus for the inspection was to investigate what leaders are doing to develop positive behaviour in the school. Actions taken to improve attendance were also explored. In the past, exclusion rates have been higher than the national average and fewer pupils have attended regularly. Leaders have implemented a new behaviour policy after consulting with pupils, parents and staff. It is applied consistently across the school by all adults. The focus on expected behaviour is understood by pupils of all ages. Children in Reception explained clearly how they can move from blue to bronze through to gold. Pupils are motivated by the golden reward of tea with the headteacher. Parents who spoke to the inspector praised the positive approach. The vast majority of parents felt this new approach was beginning to have a positive impact across the school. Some parents, however, still have concerns about the behaviour of some pupils and their parents.
- This new approach has resulted in fewer incidents of poor behaviour and, consequently, the number of exclusions is reducing. A similar robust but positive approach is now in place for managing attendance. Any absence from school is

quickly followed up. Senior leaders, including governors, monitor and analyse the attendance of individuals and groups. Any concern is acted upon swiftly. First-day calling, home visits, meetings with senior leaders and referrals to attendance officers are some of the actions taken recently. Despite leaders' best efforts, attendance remains below national averages, mainly due to the high number of pupils who are regularly absent from school.

- A second focus was to understand how effectively leaders are ensuring that disadvantaged pupils are making good progress and closing the differences in achievement with other pupils. At the end of key stage 2 in 2017, disadvantaged pupils had made better progress than other pupils in the school, but fewer were reaching greater depth.
- The progress and attainment of disadvantaged pupils are a key priority for leaders and governors. They have high expectations for every pupil and put no ceiling on what pupils can achieve. Leaders monitor the progress disadvantaged pupils make very closely. They use regular opportunities to discuss pupils' progress with every teacher. They make sure that any pupil at risk of falling behind is identified early. They work with teachers to make sure that a planned programme of support is implemented. Additional adults provide effective support. This work is kept under regular review. This helps leaders and teachers respond where they need to take action, for example where attendance is affecting progress. Class by class, and half-term by half-term, the progress disadvantaged pupils make in reading, writing and mathematics is analysed carefully. Governors evaluate the use of additional funding to support these pupils. They ensure that funding is spent well and that pupils are making good progress as a result. School data shows that, in four out of six year groups, the differences in achievement are diminishing rapidly in all three key subjects.
- Another focus during the inspection was to explore how effectively teaching is meeting the learning needs of boys. For a number of years, boys have not achieved as highly as girls, particularly in reading and writing. Teachers are clear about the need to engage boys in their learning. A range of initiatives have been implemented. These include the introduction of regular forest-school activities for younger pupils. As a result, boys observed during the inspection were as focused on their learning as girls. Boys in key stage 2 talked enthusiastically about the new topics they were studying. They particularly like the hooks at the start of each new topic, such as the visit from the 'bug lady'. Boys were excited by the chance to wrap a friend up as a mummy in preparation for studying ancient Egypt. The focus on engaging boys is having an impact right from the start of school. In Reception, boys were deeply focused on making worm soup. Others who were writing jumped up and down with obvious excitement as they completed a sentence correctly. However, leaders recognise that more can be done to improve the balance between child-initiated and teacher-led activities.
- The progress of boys is monitored closely by senior leaders. Additional support is put in place quickly. For example, mathematics on the move enables boys to put their mathematics skills into practice in an active way. Boys were able to recognise and talk about their own progress too. Year 6 boys identified the progress they had made in their writing: 'We can write using a cursive joined

script and we use ambitious vocabulary which makes our writing more interesting.'

- Finally, we looked at the effectiveness of actions taken to raise standards in mathematics. Two years ago, the school was in the bottom 20% of schools nationally for progress in mathematics. In response to this, leaders implemented a comprehensive improvement strategy. Step by step, aspects of mathematics provision have been improved. A clear policy is in place and expectations are understood by all staff. As a result of high-quality training, staff have the skills and knowledge required to teach the mathematics curriculum. Additional resources are put to good use across the school. These help pupils develop a secure understanding of a range of mathematical concepts. Teachers know when to move a pupil on to using and applying their skills rather than just developing their fluency. This is resulting in more rapid progress. Outcomes for pupils have risen, although there is still some work to do to increase the proportion of pupils attaining at greater depth. This measured approach has ensured that the school is no longer in the bottom 20% of schools nationally.

Next steps for the school

Leaders and those responsible for governance should ensure that:

- the balance between teacher-led and child-initiated activities in the early years is further developed so that pupils acquire the skills necessary for key stage 1
- links with parents continue to be strengthened so that attendance levels rise and fewer pupils are consistently absent
- the expertise and extensive leadership capacity within the school are built upon to drive further success so that outcomes for pupils continue to rise.

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

Yours sincerely

Nicola Harwood
Her Majesty's Inspector

Information about the inspection

I held discussions with you and other leaders about the key lines of enquiry for this inspection, the school's self-evaluation and plans for future improvement. We discussed information about pupils' current progress and attainment and talked about significant changes since the last inspection.

I met with a group of five governors, including the chair and vice-chair. I also met with a group of teaching and non-teaching staff. I considered the 20 responses to the staff questionnaire.

I carried out learning walks and visits to classrooms with you to look at the impact of teaching and assessment on pupils' learning and progress. During these visits, I spoke with pupils and discussed their work with them. I looked at a range of mathematics books with the deputy headteacher.

I talked to a group of pupils to seek their views. I talked to pupils on the playground during their breaktime.

I met with parents before school started and considered the 52 responses to Ofsted's Parent View questionnaire. I also considered the 47 free-text responses.

I looked at a range of documents, including your school self-evaluation document and school development plan, your plans for raising attainment, minutes of governing body meetings, procedures for safeguarding and for checking the suitability of staff to work with pupils, and leaders' monitoring of attendance data.

I checked the school website.