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Miss Corrinne Smith
Head of School
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Dear Miss Smith

Short inspection of Brayford Academy

Following my visit to the school on 23 November 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 your predecessor school was judged to be good in October 2012.

This school continues to be good.

The leadership team has maintained the good quality of education in the school since the last inspection. You and your leadership team act with integrity, have an accurate evaluation of the school and act to improve aspects where performance is not as strong.

The school is part of a multi-academy trust which has brought much-needed stability to the running of the school. Governors and staff speak positively about the opportunities provided to the school, which include moderation of pupils' learning and the collaborative nature of working relationships. An example is the role that coordinators of specific areas of school performance have across all schools. The school has benefited from this arrangement while also maintaining the features which makes Brayford Academy unique in the community that it serves.

You give an accurate and honest account of the school. You know where its strengths and areas for improvement lie and have demonstrated how the actions taken have resulted in positive changes. You, other leaders and governors work as a cohesive team and regularly share findings from monitoring so that all know how the school is performing.

At the beginning of the inspection, we agreed on the lines of enquiry that I would consider during the day. These included establishing the effectiveness of actions to improve progress in writing across key stage 2. We agreed that I would explore how teaching, learning and assessment supports pupils to make progress in

mathematics across key stage 1 and key stage 2. Thirdly, I considered how well adults support pupils who have special educational needs (SEN) and/or disabilities and the impact that this has had on their progress. Finally, I considered whether safeguarding is effective.

Safeguarding is effective.

Leaders carry out thorough recruitment checks on all prospective members of staff to make sure that anyone employed is suitable to work with children. Once employed, staff receive a comprehensive induction and training which enables them to carry out their responsibilities effectively. Leaders and governors carry out regular audits of safeguarding procedures to ensure that they are compliant and leaders act on any recommendations in order to make improvements.

Leaders act in a timely and effective manner when raising any concerns about a pupil's welfare. No time is wasted. Staff have a vigilant attitude towards safeguarding, knowing that concerns can arise from any individual at any one time. As a result, recording-keeping and chronologies are thorough and adults log and communicate any concerns that they may have effectively. Where you have greater concerns, you communicate these to external agencies. Safeguarding is paramount at Brayford. Governors keep a watchful eye on ongoing safeguarding cases and, through their termly overview, they are able to track incidents and offer support where needed. Pupils feel safe and parents wholly agree.

Inspection findings

- First, I considered how the teaching of writing across key stage 2 has had an impact on the progress that pupils make. This was as a result of progress being in the bottom 20% nationally in 2016 and 2017. You have acted to improve outcomes for pupils and there is already evidence of the positive impact that this is having. Pupils' workbooks show strong progress. This has resulted from teachers having raised expectations of what pupils can achieve and making it clear what pupils must do in order to make progress. You have introduced a new approach to writing. It is already clear that this is having a positive impact on pupils' outcomes in books.
- Pupils' workbooks are well presented and demonstrate a rich sense of pride. It was clear that pupils are building up their knowledge and understanding in writing and applying the skills that they have learned across a range of genres. In lower key stage 2, we found evidence that pupils' writing was particularly strong, with more pupils willing to take risks in their writing and experiment with different writing techniques. In upper key stage 2, pupils seem less willing to do so. Leaders are aware of this and have acted to ensure that pupils feel confident as writers and develop the skills required in order to make strong progress.
- Second, I considered how pupils develop mathematical skills across both key stages 1 and 2 and the impact that this has on the progress that pupils make. We looked at books across both key stages as well as visiting lessons. Across the school, there is a consistent approach to the teaching of mathematics. Pupils' workbooks show that pupils have increasing opportunities to develop their

reasoning and problem-solving skills. Teachers are skilled in making sure that pupils receive work that is in line with their age in a mixed-aged class. Pupils' workbooks show a clear sequence of work which aligns closely with the skills that they are developing. They have adequate time on each area of learning and teachers quickly identify pupils who may be falling behind and provide effective support.

- As we visited mathematics lessons, we could see the whole-school approach to teaching mathematics come to life. Pupils are engaged in learning and teachers are skilled in developing pupils' understanding. However, it became clear that teachers are not consistently challenging the most able pupils. In some cases, pupils found the work too easy, which resulted in progress slowing down for these pupils. You agree that the focus has been on ensuring that pupils do not fall behind and it is time to focus on those that are capable of achieving more.
- Finally, I explored how well adults support pupils who have SEN and/or disabilities and the impact that this has had on their progress. In classes, we saw evidence of adults supporting pupils effectively and in line with the support plans that are in place. The support that they receive is of high quality and precise. Specific targets are set according to the area of need and leaders regularly review the impact.
- The school has set high expectations on the progress that pupils make, with the philosophy that those who receive support should be making more progress than their peers. As a result, the vast majority of pupils who have SEN and/or disabilities are making strong progress and catching up. This is due to the precise interventions and the regular monitoring that you and other leaders carry out. Staff review targets frequently to ensure that plans are well tailored to each pupil and that progress rates maintain pace.

Next steps for the school

Leaders and those responsible for governance should ensure that:

- pupils make strong progress in writing across the school, particularly those pupils who are working at age-related expectations
- most-able pupils receive challenging work in mathematics lessons which results in strong progress and more pupils working at a higher standard.

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

Yours sincerely

Nathan Kemp
Her Majesty's Inspector

Information about the inspection

During this inspection, I spoke to you, the executive headteacher and the special educational needs coordinator. I also spoke to representatives of the governing body and trustees. You and I made visits to lessons to observe pupils. We also scrutinised the work in pupils' books.

I looked at a range of documentary evidence, which included the school's self-evaluation and the current school development plan, as well as progress and monitoring information. Additionally, I scrutinised various safeguarding records, including those relating to the suitability of staff to work with children and training opportunities for staff. I also met with the designated safeguarding leader. I took account of 17 responses to the Parent View online survey.