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11 February 2019

Paula Weaver  
Headteacher  
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Dear Mrs Weaver

### **Short inspection of Allens Croft Primary School**

Following my visit to the school on 11 January 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 January 2015.

#### **This school continues to be good.**

The leadership team has maintained the good quality of education in the school since the last inspection. Pupils are safe, well-behaved and make good progress in all three key stages in subjects across the curriculum including writing, reading and mathematics. Results from the 2018 national assessments show that pupils' attainment was above average in writing, mathematics and reading in key stages 1 and 2 and in the early years foundation stage (EYFS). You provide inspiring leadership and the school's strong leadership team works well together. Staff morale is high, and parents are highly supportive of the school. School governance is effective, and you have strong and trusting relationships with the local authority.

You have developed a broad and balanced curriculum and give pupils a wide range of engaging learning activities. For example, pupils learn through drama in different subjects and enjoy their work and develop curiosity. You have good links with external partners, such as the Royal Ballet. Pupils' creative and arts work has been recognised nationally with the Gold Artsmark award.

You ensure that pupils with special educational needs and/or disabilities (SEND) are taught well by experienced and well-qualified professionals. The Resource Base provision is a strength of the school. Pupils in these two classes enjoy their learning and do well.

Pupils work effectively together as whole class or in small groups. Pupils have a

strong knowledge of British values and talked to me enthusiastically about their rights and responsibilities: they said how important it is to respect one another and different cultural traditions. There are 42 different languages spoken at the school and pupils who speak English as an additional language make especially strong progress in all three key stages.

At the previous inspection you were asked to improve a number of areas. These included: helping the most able pupils make better progress; improving pupils' progress in mathematics; and working with less experienced staff to check and evaluate pupils' progress. Leaders have improved their colleagues' ability to identify pupils' strengths and weaknesses. You have trained staff well in, for example, mathematics mastery techniques. Consequently, current pupils apply reasoning and solve problems effectively. You are continuing to improve the way the most able pupils are challenged. However, results in the 2018 national assessments showed that some of the most able pupils did not make as much progress as they should.

Your whole-school planning and self-evaluation are precise. Staff and governors play critical roles in developing improvements and reviewing the success of school strategies. This has led, for example, to greater consistency in the quality of teaching and learning. Most pupils do well because teachers' expectations are high and based on reliable information.

Parents and staff are very supportive of the school and its leadership. Parents value, for example, the 'come and learn' and 'stay and play' sessions. These enable parents to share an understanding of ways to help pupils learn. The majority of responses to Ofsted's questionnaire for pupils were positive, with pupils reporting that they feel safe at school and enjoy learning. The local authority reports that you lead the school with high focus, determination and imagination. It also recognises other leaders' strengths.

The governing body is a strong, well-trained team and its members are experienced and skilled. Governors work effectively with you and the staff, challenging and supporting you and not being over-reliant on your view of pupils' progress. Governors have an accurate understanding of the school's strengths and weaknesses. When governors visit the school, they talk with pupils and staff and thus gain an informed understanding of pupils' progress. Governors carefully check the spending of pupil premium grants and the funding provided for pupils with SEND. The governing body has ensured that the school recruits teachers who are well qualified and committed to its inclusive ethos.

### **Safeguarding is effective.**

The leadership team has ensured that all safeguarding arrangements are fit for purpose. A very effective team of staff leads safeguarding. This team is trained to a high level and staff respond quickly and successfully whenever pupils and families need additional support. Planning for pupils' safeguarding is detailed, thorough and makes use of a wide range of support offered by the local authority. Staff are well trained and use the school's up-to-date safeguarding policy to help pupils learn safe

behaviours. Staff and pupils make good use of published resources and pupils have learned techniques to stay safe and share any worries they have with appropriate adults. Pupils have a clear understanding of how to stay safe online. In your personal, social and health education programme, for example, you teach pupils how to use mobile phones safely, how to report online bullying and how to search the internet in a secure manner. Pupils are aware of the dangers of radicalisation and know that extremist views are not acceptable.

## **Inspection findings**

- This inspection focused on several aspects of the school's work. First, I looked at how well the curriculum for disadvantaged pupils helps them to make good progress. I found that the curriculum is broad, balanced and effective because you have ensured that reading, writing and mathematics are well taught well. In addition, pupils have plenty of opportunities to apply their knowledge and skills in different subjects. Leaders successfully manage the curriculum for disadvantaged pupils through regular checks on their progress and clear planning to fill any gaps in their learning. Staff plan strong continuity from year group to year group so that pupils learn in a logical progression and are well prepared for the next stage in their learning. They are confident about learning and enjoy their work, particularly in the arts. For example, staff have a close link with a theatre in Birmingham. Pupils and staff work with theatre professionals to bring books and plays to life and this helps pupils to develop their imagination.
- Disadvantaged pupils make strong progress in writing. In key stage 2, pupils' books contain good-quality writing in imaginative and non-fiction work. In key stage 1, pupils successfully learn core writing skills in spelling, punctuation and grammar. In the EYFS, writing is taught well. Children become skilled at mark-making, letter formation and combinations. Pupils in key stages 1 and 2 practise spellings before they start writing at length, and spelling lists are sent home so that families can help. Pupils benefit from a wide range of writing activities. These include poetry and diary work linked with Remembrance Day. Pupils enjoyed reading this work in performances to the public.
- Staff know that reading for inference is a key skill needed by pupils. They have planned effective activities to help pupils to make progress. For instance, in the EYFS, children read words accurately and find words they need for writing successfully. This is because phonics is well taught in the EYFS and subsequently in key stage 1. When pupils need additional help, they get high-quality one-to-one or small-group support from skilled teaching assistants.
- The second focus of this inspection was the progress made by the most able pupils. Current pupils' books contain evidence of pupils' learning a wide range of writing skills such as extended writing in variety of styles and learning a rich vocabulary. Pupils in key stage 1 work successfully at challenging algebraic equations. Across the school, the most able pupils learn effectively about using multimedia techniques in art and design.
- However, Year 6 test results in 2018 show that a few of the most able pupils did not make strong enough progress in key stage 2. Staff know that there is more to be done to improve pupils' abilities to understand more-difficult questions in

reading and mathematics. You have identified that further training is needed for staff so that the most able pupils are challenged more effectively. Inspection evidence supports this view.

- The inspection also focused on the progress of pupils with SEND. These pupils are doing well with their reading, writing and mathematics, both in the Resource Base and across the school, because special needs teaching is very successful. Pupils learn in small groups, through one-to-one support or in whole-class situations. In all cases, they are nurtured and challenged by their teachers. Work in their books shows that they are not afraid of making mistakes and learn well from the feedback teachers give them. Those with education, health and care plans have well-planned targets, which teachers regularly review. The ethos of the school is one of optimism, calm and an enjoyment of learning and this helps pupils to thrive. Pupils who need additional help with language are given effective support from speech and language therapists. All your staff have been well trained and provide, for example good-quality learning for pupils with autistic spectrum disorder.
- I looked at key stage 2 mathematics and found that most current pupils are making strong progress. Pupils are proud of their work and enjoy talking about mathematics. Recently, staff have improved the way they help pupils develop fluency in mathematics. Pupils learn basic skills every day and in a systematic manner. For instance, pupils work out mental mathematics questions as soon as they arrive in class. This engages and interests them. You use an approach you call 'every second counts' that gives pupils thinking time to solve problems. Teachers model how this is done, and pupils' books show that they can successfully break down mathematics tasks into achievable steps. During this inspection, I saw plenty of examples of meaningful and achievable challenge in mathematics.
- Another focus of the inspection was pupils' attendance. I found that the attendance of disadvantaged pupils and those with SEND is improving considerably. Staff work closely as a team, successfully sharing information about pupils' barriers to regular attendance. This means that staff intervene quickly with support for families when this is needed. You give helpful guidance and support to parents. Staff work well with the local authority to help pupils develop habits of punctuality and regular attendance.

### **Next steps for the school**

Leaders and those responsible for governance should ensure that:

- staff training is developed further so that the most able pupils have the knowledge and confidence to engage independently with challenging work, particularly at key stage 2
- teaching improves the most able pupils' ability to understand and respond to demanding questions especially in reading and mathematics at key stage 2.

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

Graham Tyrer  
**Ofsted Inspector**

### **Information about the inspection**

I observed learning in lessons throughout key stages 1 and 2, the early years foundation stage and the Resource Base provision. I carried out a joint work scrutiny with members of the senior leadership team. I held meetings with school leaders, governors and a representative of the local authority. I met with pupils to discuss aspects of safety and learning. I scrutinised the single central record of recruitment and vetting checks on staff, met with the designated safeguarding lead and looked at records of recruitment, welfare plans, and actions taken to keep pupils safe. I looked at documentation the school produces as part of its self-evaluation and development planning. I reviewed policies and documents published on the school's website and made available during the inspection. I considered the 12 responses to Ofsted's staff questionnaire, responses to Parent View, five free-text responses and 132 responses to Ofsted's pupil questionnaire.