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Piccadilly Gate
Store Street
Manchester
M1 2WD

T 0300 123 4234
www.gov.uk/ofsted



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Mrs Rachel Colquhoun
Headteacher
Bramley Grange Primary School
Howard Road
Bramley
Rotherham
South Yorkshire
S66 2SY

Dear Mrs Colquhoun

Short inspection of Bramley Grange Primary School

Following my visit to the school on 12 September 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 November 2011.

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 the rest of the senior leadership team worked quickly to tackle the areas of improvement identified at the last inspection. Through rigorous monitoring, you continue to identify and address areas of improvement as they arise. Since the last inspection, there have been some minor changes in the leadership and teaching team. Careful strategic planning has enabled senior leaders to maintain the capacity for school improvement. The senior leadership team has increased with the addition of a new deputy headteacher who joins the existing headteacher and two assistant headteachers. Some parents and carers express concerns over how well the school is led and managed as communication with them is not as good as it could be. The trust board supports school improvement well and enlists external support when required, including a consultant headteacher from a local teaching school. However, some members of the board are not as proficient at challenging the school as they could be. The teaching staff team remains relatively stable, with 71% of the teaching staff having been at the school for a number of years.

Pupils say how they are happy at the school, and that they feel safe and consider that they make good progress. A total of 90 parents responded to the Parent View questionnaire and 61 commented on the free-text facility. I spoke to several parents on the day of the inspection. Over 80% of these parents also considered that their children were happy and safe and the vast majority also knew that their children were making good progress. Pupils comment that teachers help them learn and they feel that they can ask them for help in both academic and personal situations.

Safeguarding is effective.

As the designated safeguarding lead, you work well with outside agencies and ensure that staff have appropriate knowledge to ensure that pupils' needs are met and that safeguarding arrangements are effective. You record incidents diligently on a bespoke electronic system so that records are detailed and fit for purpose. Your staff in school know that they can turn to you if they have any concerns regarding a pupil's welfare. Staff I spoke to said that you always took their concerns seriously and investigated and recorded them appropriately. You have taken action on concerns about site security and have implemented strategies to ensure pupils' safety. Governors are not challenging you rigorously enough regarding safeguarding and this has in the past led to some minor administrative errors.

Inspection findings

- Children in early years continue to make good progress from their starting points. They very quickly settle into their new environment as staff make them feel secure. There are many exciting activities to engage and interest them. The early years provision was restructured in 2015. Children now learn in age-related groups with highly experienced and skilled staff. This has led to higher expectations and outcomes. The early years provision is extremely well planned so that children learn in all the different areas of development with a range of intriguing and stimulating activities. The early year outside environment is exceptional. It offers children a range of problem-solving and challenging situations where they learn at a fast pace. Children behave well as they are so engaged in their learning and they enjoy interacting with other children.
- Pupils in the hearing impairment unit benefit from a mix of both small, focused teaching lessons held in the unit and from integrating, with support, into the mainstream classes. Their progress in both settings is closely tracked through the small steps they make, so that their individual targets closely match their needs. You and your senior leaders hold termly pupil progress meetings with class teachers where the needs of all children, including those who have special educational needs and/or disabilities, are considered. Individual education plans for these pupils are regularly reviewed. This enables senior leaders in the school to gain an accurate picture of how well these pupils are doing. However, trustees do not hold leaders in the hearing impairment unit rigorously to account for the work they do, as they do not raise questions around the quality of teaching or pupils' progress in this unit.

- You and your senior leaders have an effective system in place which enables you to closely monitor the quality of teaching and pupils' progress. Pupils across the school are demonstrating good progress by reaching standards that are expected or are higher than national averages. You and your teaching team ensure that the curriculum engages pupils so they are eager to learn, with topics such as the one based around the book, 'Charlie and the Chocolate Factory' or 'amazing architecture'. All these aspects mean that outcomes are improving, particularly in writing and mathematics. All staff have made a concerted effort to achieve a consistently high-quality approach to the teaching and engaging of pupils in the learning of these subjects. Senior leaders use a range of evidence to hold teachers to account for pupils' progress. Immediate intervention is put in place if pupils need help to keep pace with their learning. The work I saw in pupils' books, particularly in mathematics, demonstrates that the focus on high-quality teaching to help pupils learn is having a positive effect on pupils' learning. You and your team have made sure that the outside environment also offers pupils the chance to learn. It is extremely well planned for pupils to develop both personally and academically as they learn through topics such as looking after chickens, growing their own vegetables and studying minibeasts.
- You and your team have introduced a number of strategies to inform and engage parents in the life of the school and in their children's education, for example, through social media, new starter books, pupil handbooks and a redesigned website. However, there are still a number of parents who do not consider that school staff, particularly senior leaders, are approachable or that they listen to and consider concerns that they raise. Your senior leaders and members of the trust have dealt with a small number of complaints from parents. These have been dealt with following the correct procedures and have involved outside agencies where appropriate. However, parents are still dissatisfied with some aspects of how the school is led and managed. Out of the 90 responses to Ofsted's Parent View, 73% of parents would not recommend Bramley Grange to another parent and only 14% consider that the school is well led and managed. Out of 28 staff in the school, 24 responded to the questionnaire during the inspection and of these, 91% were proud to be a member of staff at your school and 70% consider that the school is well led and managed. During the inspection, you agreed with me that more needed to be done to improve communication with parents.
- As chief executive officer of the trust and headteacher of the school, you acknowledge that the trust board is not always as rigorous at challenging the school leaders as it could be. A new chair of the trustee board has been in place since September 2017. He has already demonstrated that he has an excellent insight into how well the school is doing and what must be done to further its progress towards becoming an outstanding school. He acknowledges that not all trustees have a good understanding of their role and to this end, The Grange Trust has enlisted the external support of a national leader of governance who will start to work with trust board members in the next few weeks.

Next steps for the school

Leaders and those responsible for governance should ensure that:

- communication with parents is improved by ensuring that: parents are better informed about decisions made; they have a greater understanding of what is happening in school; and they consider that they can approach teachers and senior leaders with their concerns, and that these concerns will be listened to and considered
- trustees hold all senior leaders, including those in the hearing impairment unit, fully to account for the work they do and that they have a clear understanding of the information they are given so that they can challenge and support the school accordingly.

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

Yours sincerely

Jo Sharpe
Her Majesty's Inspector

Information about the inspection

During the inspection, I met with you, members of your senior leadership team, those in charge of the hearing impairment unit and members of the trust board. I spoke on the phone to the chair of the trust board and another member of the trust board. You accompanied me on a tour of the school where I was able to speak to pupils about their learning, consider work in books and the quality of teaching. I was able to observe pupils' behaviour at different times of the school day, including dinnertime, and I also spoke to members of staff. I was able to speak to pupils both informally and more formally, when they read to me and told me about the work in their books. I reviewed a range of documentation, including the single central record of employability checks, safeguarding records, the school's self-evaluation as well as evaluations of the quality of teaching. I also took account of 90 responses to Ofsted's online questionnaire, Parent View, and 61 comments on the free-text facility for parents, 24 responses to the staff questionnaire and 44 responses to the pupil questionnaire.