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20 October 2017

Ms Jess Caunter  
Headteacher  
Barrs Court Primary School  
Stephens Drive  
Barrs Court  
Bristol  
BS30 7JB

Dear Ms Caunter

### **Short inspection of Barrs Court Primary School**

Following my visit to the school on 10 October 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 the school was judged to be good in January 2014.

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

The leadership team has maintained the good quality of education in the school since the last inspection. You lead with integrity, purpose and resolve. This is because you believe passionately that all pupils in the school deserve to succeed. You have developed a strong team around you to achieve this aim.

Leadership has strengthened at all levels in the school because staff are clear about their roles, feel well supported and know their contributions are valued. This enables staff to lead with confidence, whatever their role in the school. You understand the importance of succession planning to ensure that the school's achievements are sustained. Consequently, the right people are always in the right place to take the school forward.

Leaders are not afraid to confront weaknesses. You have instilled an open, 'can-do' attitude among staff so that leaders look for solutions collectively. As an outward-facing team, leaders also welcome working with professionals outside of the school to improve practice. This approach has prevented staff from becoming insular in their outlook. As a result, they are receptive to new ideas and keen to learn from others.

School leaders receive strong support from governors, who exercise their responsibilities with vigour and enthusiasm. They are highly committed, visit the school often and involve themselves in the life of the school. Governors provide effective strategic oversight because they understand the extent of their

responsibilities. They hold leaders to account for the achievement of pupils by using performance information to ask the right questions of leaders. They also use this information to measure the effectiveness of leaders' actions.

Leaders and the wider staff have nurtured a positive, warm and vibrant school culture. Pupils enjoy school and want to participate because they are energised by school staff. Correspondingly, their behaviour is good and they respond well to the good quality of teaching they receive. As one parent who responded to Parent View stated, 'The teachers and headteacher work hard to make this school and the children the best they can be.'

At the beginning of the inspection, we agreed on the key lines of enquiry to be considered during the day. These included establishing the effectiveness of actions taken to raise achievement for pupils at key stage 2, particularly in writing. We also considered whether attainment is rising in key stage 1 for different groups of pupils. Furthermore, we considered whether pupils are now being challenged to a greater degree and the extent to which leaders are fostering good relationships with parents. Finally, we considered whether safeguarding is effective. These lines of enquiry are considered below under 'Safeguarding' and 'Inspection findings'.

### **Safeguarding is effective.**

All staff are trained to know what to do and who to speak to should they have concerns about a child. Consequently, all staff know that child protection is everyone's responsibility. Referrals are recorded securely online. They note comprehensively the details of incidents, action taken and the resolution in each individual case. Checks to ensure that staff are suitable to work in the school are complete, up to date and comprehensive.

Pupils are aware of how to keep themselves safe, particularly online. They know that they should report any cases of cyber bullying, or inappropriate internet sites, to a teacher. Pupils who spoke with me reported that they do not think there is much bullying in the school. If it does occur, they said it is dealt with quickly and effectively. One pupil was adamant when she told me, 'We don't accept it at our school.'

The site is secure because staff have audited provision and acted on recommendations. As a result, access to the site and buildings is restricted at certain times and monitored. This helps pupils to feel safe. However, concern was expressed that these arrangements make the area outside of the school, which is by a road, potentially more hazardous for pupils as they wait to come in. Leaders are aware of this issue and are giving it due consideration.

The very large majority of parents who responded to Parent View agree that their child is safe.

## Inspection findings

- Leaders are adept at analysing performance information in order to identify areas of weakness. They take action promptly to tackle areas for improvement. As a result, pupils achieve well in their different subjects. The attainment of middle-ability pupils in writing was higher in 2017 than 2016 as a result of concerted efforts to tackle this issue.
- Staff use performance information well to identify gaps in pupils' learning. They adapt teaching strategies and target support carefully to help pupils catch up. For example, highly skilled teaching assistants work successfully with individuals and groups of pupils to reinforce particular aspects of their learning.
- Teachers in all key stages plan interesting activities to meet the needs of pupils. As a result, pupils of different abilities and from different backgrounds are able to access the learning and participate in lessons. They enjoy making progress. The stimulating learning environment also acts as an additional resource to help pupils in their learning, while showcasing their best work.
- Pupils across the school have good attitudes to learning. They feel confident to share their opinions and make mistakes because they know they are well supported by staff. One pupil said to me, 'The teachers don't get cross if you struggle.' Another pupil said that staff 'respect how you're feeling and they help you'. Consequently, the work in pupils' books shows that they are keen to improve their work and take pride in it. The work of disadvantaged pupils and those who have special educational needs and/or disabilities is as well presented as that of their peers. All pupils, regardless of background or ability, want to move their learning forward and produce their best work.
- Staff have established warm, open relationships with pupils. These relationships have been nurtured, in part, through the high-quality feedback that staff provide to pupils. Pupils are praised for their efforts and are also told clearly and supportively where aspects of their work could be improved. As a result, pupils understand the value of spotting their mistakes, editing their work and redrafting it.
- Pupils of different abilities are now challenged to think more deeply than at the time of the last inspection. This is because staff plan, as a matter of routine, for pupils' different needs. Pupils also talk about the 'Chilli Challenge' being a familiar aspect of their learning. This initiative encourages pupils to take responsibility for their own learning and select tasks that are the right level of difficulty for them. Pupils can select 'mild', 'spicy' or 'hot' tasks, depending on what suits them. Their teachers ensure that pupils are ambitious, yet realistic, in their choices. Nevertheless, leaders acknowledge that the most able pupils could be challenged further still. This is supported by pupils, some of whom told me that they did not always feel challenged.
- Staff are continuing to build positive relationships with parents. They are now more accessible to parents throughout the week and are proactive in trying to help parents with any concerns they may have. At the time of the last inspection, a minority of parents were not satisfied with some aspects of the school's work. However, the latest response to Parent View indicates that the vast majority of

parents agree that their child is happy, well taught and makes good progress. Nearly all parents who responded to the survey would recommend the school.

- Overall attendance is above average. This is also the case for most groups of pupils, including those who are disadvantaged. In the case of a small number of persistent absentees, their absence is for medical reasons. Staff monitor this absence closely and work with parents to improve it, as they do for any absence that is unauthorised.

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

Leaders and those responsible for governance should ensure that:

- staff continue to challenge the most able pupils to make the progress of which they are capable in their different subjects.

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

Yours sincerely

Steve Smith  
**Her Majesty's Inspector**

### **Information about the inspection**

During this inspection, I spoke to you and the deputy headteacher. I also spoke to representatives of the governing body, pupils and an external adviser from South Gloucestershire County Council.

Senior leaders and I made visits to lessons to observe pupils' attitudes to learning. I also scrutinised the work in pupils' books with other school leaders.

A range of documentary evidence was considered, which included the school's self-evaluation as well as progress and attendance information. Additionally, I scrutinised various safeguarding records, including those relating to the suitability of staff to work with children.

I took account of 79 responses to the Parent View online survey.