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Dear Mrs Shaw

Short inspection of Branston Junior Academy

Following my visit to the school on 22 March 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 June 2013.

This school continues to be good.

The leadership team has maintained the good quality of education in the school since the last inspection. You have implemented robust policies and procedures that have enabled you to examine different aspects of the school and its provision in detail. You are thorough in the analysis of the school's strengths and areas for development. As a result, your self-evaluation is accurate and your plans for school improvement are clear and concise.

The school has a warm and welcoming atmosphere where pupils work hard and make good progress in a variety of subjects. Relationships between staff and pupils are strong. Pupils told me that they are happy at the school and feel safe, both inside and outside when playing on the playground. You and the other staff have helped to create a culture where 'learning is a habit for life'.

The senior leader responsible for English has recently introduced an approach to guided reading that aims to improve pupils' vocabulary and comprehension skills. This has been successful and assessment information provided by the school indicates that the vast majority of pupils are on track to reach age-related standards in reading by the end of this academic year.

In 2016, the proportions of pupils who achieved the expected standard in reading and writing were in line with national figures. The proportion of pupils who achieved the expected standard in mathematics was above the national figure. The

proportions who achieved at a greater depth in reading, writing and mathematics were broadly in line with national figures.

At the previous inspection, you were asked to ensure that teachers planned lessons jointly, that lessons had opportunities for pupils to learn through exciting and engaging activities, and that pupils had more opportunities to work independently. You have successfully tackled these areas by implementing whole-school topics that encourage teachers to share effectively their ideas and resources. 'WOW!' days have added to the pupils' enjoyment of the curriculum. For example, recent visits to The Deep and the Natural History Museum have helped to deepen pupils' knowledge and understanding of the topics 'Life under the sea' and 'Dinosaurs'. Pupils told me they thoroughly enjoyed these visits. The 'Research Zone' allows pupils to work independently using iPads. The inspector also asked that particular attention be given to the pupils in Year 3 to ensure that these pupils make rapid progress. You have introduced a 'gap analysis' that helps teachers pinpoint any areas in which pupils in Year 3 need extra support in reading and mathematics. Consequently, pupils are quickly given the support they need in order to catch up.

You have successfully created links with schools from other countries, including Bangladesh and Poland. In one class, I saw pupils in Years 3 and 4 using iPads to research what life is like for people who live in Guadeloupe. This work is enabling pupils to have a better understanding of life in cultures that are different from their own.

Pupils do not currently have enough opportunities to practise problem-solving and reasoning skills so that they can make the progress of which they are capable in mathematics. You are already aware of this and some teachers are beginning to plan activities that challenge pupils in this way.

Members of the governing body have a good mixture of skills and experience. Governors agree that they require more training for the governing body to hold you and other senior leaders fully to account for the actions you take.

Safeguarding is effective.

There is a strong safeguarding culture at the school. Rigorous checks are carried out on adults before they are allowed to start working or volunteering at the school. The single central record is well maintained and up to date. You have a robust system in place that enables staff to report to you any safeguarding or welfare concerns they have regarding a pupil. You make swift referrals to outside agencies, such as social care, should a pupil or family require extra support. Safeguarding records are detailed and you understand the importance of keeping them securely and in good order. You have undergone appropriate training in various safeguarding topics, including social media, sexting and the 'Prevent' duty. Consequently, you are aware of the dangers pupils may face regarding extremism and radicalisation. Staff receive comprehensive annual updates to ensure that their knowledge and understanding of safeguarding is up to date.

Bullying and racist incidents are extremely rare. Any pupil who requires extra help to manage their behaviour is provided with a behaviour support plan. Parents are fully involved in this process and records provided by the school indicate that the plans are successful in improving the behaviour of these pupils.

The school's policies and procedures for monitoring pupil attendance are good. Consequently, rates of absence, including persistence absence, are below those seen in other schools nationally.

Inspection findings

- Pupil premium funding is allocated and monitored closely. The senior leader responsible has an excellent overview of how the funding is spent on each pupil and the strong impact it is having on their progress. Current assessment information provided by the school and work seen in books indicate that these pupils are making good progress in reading, writing and mathematics. Any pupils who are falling behind are identified quickly, and given the help they need.
- The teaching of science is a strength. Work seen in books shows that pupils are developing their knowledge and understanding in a wide range of scientific topics. Pupils have many opportunities to make predictions and carry out investigations. For example, pupils in Years 5 and 6 recently investigated the question, 'Do liquids with differing viscosity evaporate at different rates?'
- You have ensured that teachers are checking the consistency of their assessment of pupils' work every term. You are aware of the importance of also undertaking this moderation process with other schools, to make sure that the assessments teachers make are accurate.
- Teaching assistants are generally deployed well across the school. They support pupils of all abilities in a wide range of subjects. Consequently, pupils are given the support they need to help them reach their full potential.
- Pupils enjoy the responsibility of being elected to the school council and becoming house captains. Others become junior road safety officers and lead safety assemblies, reminding pupils to 'be bright, be seen' outside when it is dark.
- Pupils enjoy the wide range of extra-curricular clubs that are on offer. These include street dance, taekwondo, orchestra, bench ball, athletics and art. Pupils also relish the opportunities to attend residential activities at Rand Farm and Low Mill.
- Parents are kept well informed of the school and its work through its website, frequent letters, newsletters, Twitter and Facebook. Parents receive detailed end-of-year reports that outline pupils' attainment and progress and give targets for future improvement.
- Parents with whom I spoke before school and those that responded to the Ofsted questionnaire, Parent View, are overwhelmingly supportive of the school. They say that children are safe, happy and are making good progress. One parent told me, 'I have found this school to be first class.'

Next steps for the school

Leaders and those responsible for governance should ensure that:

- all teachers provide more opportunities for pupils to develop problem-solving and reasoning skills, to ensure that they are making the progress of which they are capable in mathematics
- governors participate in relevant training so they are better equipped to hold senior leaders to account for their actions and the performance of the school.

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

Yours sincerely

Peter Stonier
Her Majesty's Inspector

Information about the inspection

During this inspection, I held meetings with you, the deputy headteacher, the subject leaders in English and mathematics, the special educational needs co-ordinator, and three members of the governing body (the academy trust), including the chair of the governing body. I also met with a group of six pupils. I scrutinised a range of the school's documents, including those relating to pupils' attainment and progress, the school's self-evaluation, its improvement plans and documents relating to safeguarding. I visited all of the classrooms to see the learning that was taking place. I spoke with pupils and looked at the work in their books. I spoke with parents as they brought their children to school in the morning and I took account of the views of parents and pupils through responses to their respective online surveys.