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Mrs Kathy Brent
Headteacher
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Dear Mrs Brent

Short inspection of Princes Primary School

Following my visit to the school on 2 November 2017 with Elaine White, Ofsted Inspector, 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 outstanding in December 2012.

This school continues to be outstanding.

The leadership team has maintained the outstanding quality of education in the school since the last inspection. Working in tandem with the governors, you and your leadership team have ensured that an unswerving commitment to providing pupils with the very best education underpins all that the school does. Collectively, your staff work with passion and enthusiasm to provide every pupil with a personalised curriculum that unlocks their potential and enables them to thrive. Parents speak in glowing terms about the school. One parent summed up the views of many when she described 'an amazing school for both academic and social development'. Many parents feel the school has transformed the lives of their children. They also value greatly the help the school provides to develop their ability to support their children more effectively. Pupils are also very positive about the school and the relationships they enjoy with members of staff. Almost all pupils who were asked told inspectors they would rate the school as 'ten out of ten'.

Since the previous inspection, the school has continued to grow and move forward. The school has become a designated teaching school and the school has formed the Merseyside Teaching School Alliance with three other local special schools. The school has played an increasingly influential role in supporting colleagues from other mainstream and special schools with areas of practice that range from supporting pupils who have particular special educational needs (SEN) and/or disabilities to the best ways of assessing pupils' progress. The school has also expanded to a third site, with three classes of younger pupils being taught at a specialist base within

Phoenix Community Primary School. You have used the increased scope of your work with other schools to develop further the expertise and skills of your staff. Your staff are hugely complimentary about the increased range of opportunities to develop their professional knowledge, understanding and skills. Your view that 'every member of staff is a leader' has enabled the staff to flourish. In turn, this has been instrumental in securing further improvements to the quality of education offered at Princes.

You have been extremely successful in improving the quality of leadership throughout the school. You have expanded the senior leadership team thoughtfully to ensure that the school has maintained excellent standards in all that it does during a period of growth. You have also trained middle leaders and this has enabled this group of staff to play an increasingly prominent role in driving improvements across the school. For example, subject coordinators have improved the quality of the curriculum, teaching and assessment in their respective areas. As a result, you have enhanced many established strengths of the school.

You have emphatically addressed the area for improvement that was identified at the last inspection. Five years ago, inspectors asked you to improve the quality of pupils' behaviour from good to outstanding, by improving the tracking of behaviour to enable you to become more adept at adjusting strategies to improve the behaviour of different pupils. You used the previous inspection report as a catalyst for overhauling your approach in this area. You have implemented a broad and ambitious plan to improve all aspects of behaviour management. You appointed a new and influential senior leader with extensive experience of working with pupils who have challenging behaviour. You have ensured that all staff received training that has developed their ability to manage behaviour in a calm and positive manner.

You have transformed the way in which pupils' behaviour is recorded and tracked, and you have developed your work with outside agencies to ensure that pupils who exhibit challenging behaviour are supported effectively. Most impressively, you have embedded a number of sophisticated strategies to help pupils self-regulate their behaviour, both as individuals and groups. For example, pupils in key stage 2 classes define what they consider to be green (positive), amber (neutral) and red (negative) behaviour, and these form the basis of class rules. On an individual level, staff use visual prompts to help pupils identify how they are feeling and to recognise the triggers that are likely to lead to poor behaviour. Furthermore, staff are exceptionally skilled in encouraging pupils to reflect on their behaviour. As a result of this work, pupils with complex behavioural needs are supported with skill and sensitivity. The number of behavioural incidents requiring physical restraint has reduced significantly. Pupils behave in a calm, orderly and considerate manner around the site, and behaviour in lessons is excellent. When poor behaviour does occur, staff ensure that it is dealt with swiftly and with minimal impact to the learning of others.

Governance is a real strength of the school. Governors are passionate about their work, and totally committed to ensuring that the school's child-centred values remain at the heart of all it does. They share your intimate and nuanced

understanding of the school's effectiveness and have a clear vision for the school to become a beacon of outstanding practice for pupils who have SEN and/or disabilities. Governors are good-humoured, critical and tenacious in their pursuit of excellence. The breadth of their involvement with the school provides them with a clear view of the quality of all aspects of the provision. Working closely with leaders, the governing body has played a pivotal role in ensuring that the school has gone from strength to strength.

You have created a culture in which all members of staff are reflective and keen to improve. The staff share your fear of complacency and they are committed to refining and developing their practice to further develop the school. You agreed with inspectors that you can further improve your monitoring systems by carefully tracking the progress made by different groups of pupils with similar prior attainment. Indeed, it came as no surprise when you showed the inspectors how you had already begun to work on this by the end of the inspection!

Safeguarding is effective.

The school's work to keep children safe is exemplary. Through effective training and the establishment of clear procedures, you have ensured that all staff are vigilant to any changes in the mood or presentation of pupils. Staff have a clear understanding of the safeguarding risks that are potentially more prevalent among pupils who have different SEN and/or disabilities. Staff know the pupils exceptionally well and they are skilled at communicating with pupils who find it challenging to express themselves clearly.

The school works in partnership with parents to ensure that pupils are looked after well. You are aware of the safeguarding implications of poor mental health and you are working closely with parents and child and adolescent mental health services (CAMHS) to equip parents with the skills to be able to support their children to maintain positive mental health. This is one strand of your innovative strategy for supporting the mental health and well-being of members of the Princes community.

You have ensured that all safeguarding records are precise and fit for purpose. Referrals are made to external agencies as appropriate, and you enjoy productive working relationships with a range of partners, including educational psychologists and occupational health.

Inspection findings

- The inspection focused on a number of key lines of enquiry. The first of these was to look at how effectively teaching is enabling pupils, particularly the most able and those who are disadvantaged, to make rapid progress from their different starting points. Observations of teaching indicated that teachers have very high expectations of what pupils of all abilities can achieve. Teachers use precise planning to ensure that pupils consistently work towards attaining ambitious personalised targets. Adults model new skills clearly and they question pupils expertly. Systems to assess what pupils can do are robust and developmental.

- Inspectors saw the most able pupils completing demanding work. For example, in one key stage 2 class, pupils were challenged to make deductions from the materials they were reading. Leaders also adopt a range of strategies to ensure that the most able pupils are challenged consistently. For example, some pupils learn alongside children in older classes, and some key stage 2 pupils integrate with mainstream lessons at Smithdown Primary School. The most able pupils are also expected to contribute to evaluating the personal targets in their individual education plans. As a result, teaching is highly effective for the most able pupils.
- You presented evidence which clearly indicates that pupils make outstanding progress across the curriculum and throughout the school. However, you are aware that pupils generally make quicker progress in key stage 2 than they do in key stage 1. You explained that this is because pupils have typically stagnated or regressed in their learning in the years immediately preceding joining Princes. You therefore work intensively with younger pupils to remove any barriers to achievement and get them ready to learn. Pupils therefore make rapid progress socially during key stage 1. Throughout key stage 2, the amount of academic progress made by pupils aligns with the impressive gains achieved in terms of social development. Consequently, pupils make outstanding progress overall during their time at the school.
- You track the amount of progress pupils make in great detail. You showed inspectors that there is no discernible difference in the amount of progress made by disadvantaged pupils compared to others. This is because staff go the extra mile to ensure that every pupil is supported to make the fastest possible progress. However, you do not track the progress made by groups of pupils with similar prior attainment. As a result, you do not know how much progress the most able pupils are making as a group, compared to pupils with different starting points.
- A second line of enquiry focused on ensuring that pupils who are taught in the two linked primary schools get as good a deal as those based in the main school. The evidence we gathered emphatically demonstrates that provision at Phoenix and Smithdown schools is every bit as impressive as that in the main school. You have ensured that both centres are effectively led and that the ethos and practice at both sites are consistent with what happens in the main school. Pupils' experiences have been enriched by opportunities provided by other schools, particularly at Smithdown Primary School. For example, pupils value opportunities to eat, play and participate in enrichment activities alongside pupils from mainstream classes. Members of staff have welcomed the opportunity to work at different sites and they feel it has helped them to sharpen and refine their practice. As a result, the very highest standards of teaching and pupils' progress are maintained across all three sites.
- Finally, we looked at how effectively the curriculum provides pupils with the breadth and quality of experience to enjoy happy and productive lives after Princes. You explained your rationale for the design of the curriculum and it is evident that leaders and governors understand the central importance of the curriculum in determining the quality of pupils' experience at the school. The curriculum is broad and balanced. It provides pupils with a rich variety of experiences that helps them to develop their understanding of the world, and

supports them to make rapid gains academically and socially. A rigorous focus on the development of literacy and numeracy skills is complemented by a rich topic-based curriculum, and extensive opportunities for enrichment.

- Pupils are well prepared for life in modern Britain. The school council and eco committee provide pupils with real-life examples of democracy in action. Furthermore, the joys of multiculturalism are consistently promoted, particularly through the celebration of different world festivals, to help pupils develop a strong awareness of different cultures and faiths. The curriculum also supports well pupils' physical development. Pupils participate in a range of sporting activities from boccia to swimming, and they even received a video message from Sir Mo Farah to wish them luck for their sports day.

Next steps for the school

Leaders and those responsible for governance should ensure that:

- the progress of different groups of pupils with similar prior attainment is carefully tracked, including the progress made by the most able pupils.

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

Yours sincerely

Will Smith

Her Majesty's Inspector

Information about the inspection

During the inspection, inspectors met with you and members of your senior leadership team. We also met with members of the governing body. We spoke with the school's improvement partner. We met formally with groups of pupils from across the school, including those who are based at Smithdown Primary School. We talked informally with pupils around the school and met formally with a group of teachers and teaching assistants.

You and other leaders accompanied us on visits to classes, where we observed teaching and learning. We observed teaching and learning in all classes, including those based at Smithdown Primary School and Phoenix Community Primary School. We also looked at the work pupils had produced in their progress files.

We examined a range of documentation, including that relating to safeguarding. We also scrutinised a range of policies, the school improvement plan and self-evaluation report. Inspectors also looked at the school's website.

As part of the inspection, we considered 25 responses to Ofsted's staff

questionnaire. There were no responses to the pupils' survey and very few responses to Ofsted's online questionnaire, Parent View. We considered the results from the school's parental questionnaire, as well as comments received by Ofsted's free-text facility.