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7 January 2016

Mr Colin Miller  
Headteacher  
Little Bowden School  
Scotland Road  
Little Bowden  
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LE16 8AY

Dear Mr Miller

### **Short inspection of Little Bowden School**

Following my visit to the school on 3 December 2015, 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 school was judged to be good in December 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 have recognised appropriate priorities for your school to focus on in order for it to continue to be good. This is reflected in your self-evaluation and in the school development plan. You responded swiftly to the disappointing results in 2015 and promptly identified the particular combination of circumstances that led to this drop in standards. You put in place effective strategies to ensure that the general trend of improvement from previous years continues.

You think carefully about the ways in which your leaders carry out their work and make sensible changes. Your leaders carry out regular monitoring to ensure that the quality of teaching continues to be mainly good. Leaders have an accurate view of where further improvements are needed. They ensure that appropriate support and training is in place for teachers to help boost the quality of teaching further.

You draw upon a range of external support productively. For example, support to ensure your teachers' assessment of pupils' work is precise as they adjust to the new curriculum. Also, support to provide valuable leadership development for your subject leaders.

You have addressed thoroughly the areas for improvement from the last inspection report. You have invested in systems that boost the accuracy and frequency of the assessment of pupils' work. This means that teachers identify promptly when their

pupils need more help, or when they are finding their work too easy, and adjust their plans accordingly. You monitor closely the support pupils receive to make sure it is effective and that they make progress.

You place great importance on the emotional well-being of your pupils. This is reflected in many aspects of life in your school. Classroom displays promote emotional literacy; assemblies focus on weekly values such as respect and tolerance. It is clear from visiting your classrooms and speaking with your pupils that your expectations for high standards of behaviour and welfare benefit your pupils greatly. Pupils are respectful and polite, towards each other and with the adults in school. They are able to explain clearly what they are learning and ways in which their teachers help them to improve. Pupils take pride in their work because of the high expectations of their teachers. Pupils understand the value of their experiences in school. They also understand how these experiences will help them fulfil their plans for the future.

### **Safeguarding is effective.**

You have established policies and practice that ensure your pupils are kept safe, and feel safe. The large majority of parents who responded to Parent View, Ofsted's online questionnaire, as well as your own survey, agree.

The governing body takes its responsibility for safeguarding very seriously. The Chair of the Governing Body completes a rigorous safeguarding audit every year to ensure that all requirements are met. Governors carry out regular health and safety checks and support you well in ensuring the school site is free from hazards.

Pupils have a good understanding of the different types of bullying. They also know how to avoid risks. This is because they have gained much guidance from assemblies, outside speakers and discussions with their teachers.

The single central record meets all requirements. Your safeguarding procedures are rigorous. Staff training is monitored closely and is up to date.

### **Inspection findings**

- Leaders have accurately recognised the priorities for the school following the disappointing results in summer 2015. You have analysed thoroughly the reasons for the drop in standards compared with recent years and immediately and successfully tackled the areas needing improvement.
- You rightly focus on boosting the achievement of disadvantaged pupils. Your leadership team has high expectations that all teachers must see this as a priority and performance management targets include specific reference to the achievement of groups of pupils. You have put in place appropriate strategies that are already seen to be making a difference in helping pupils catch up.

- Teachers routinely assess their pupils' progress in lessons so that additional support is given to pupils very quickly when they need more help. New systems, for example in mathematics, are working well to enable pupils to make better progress. The newly established 'catch up' sessions, led by higher-level teaching assistants, follow up, on a daily basis, any difficulties pupils have had with their work, and resolve them. Leaders' regular review of interventions shows that pupils make progress as a result. Your analysis shows that the gaps in achievement between disadvantaged pupils and others are closing across all year groups.
- You have boosted the areas of specialism and expertise among your teaching assistants. You have provided them with valuable training and professional development opportunities relating directly to the areas for improvement. This means that their support of pupils in the classroom and in small groups is highly effective.
- Leaders carry out regular monitoring of the quality of teaching, and frequently look at pupils' books across all year groups. Leaders rightly recognise when teachers have not used the school's marking policy consistently and provide helpful feedback to teachers. Your high expectations have led to rapid improvements, so that, for example, teachers pay greater attention to pupils' use of grammar, spelling and punctuation and provide more challenge for all pupils. Pupils across most year groups have noticed this, and can describe very clearly ways in which the written feedback from their teachers has helped them. One pupil stated, 'it gave me a big push to get better, and I improved my handwriting'.
- Teachers are alert to how quickly their pupils complete a task in lessons and provide further challenge so that pupils make the progress of which they are capable. Pupils note that 'lessons are fun ... you are put onto a harder level and it makes you think more'.
- You have taken prompt action to address the basis to last summer's drop in standards in the early years. This has included staff training; earlier, more regular and thorough assessments; and greater opportunities for pupils to apply phonics (linking letters and sounds) to a range of activities. These developments have already brought about improvements so that more children are reaching standards typical for their age quicker.
- You and your staff do valuable work to support the emotional well-being of your pupils, especially those for whom, for a variety of reasons, settling at school is not easy. Pupils are very confident that when they have any worries, they can talk to their teachers and any problems will be resolved. Pupils say how helpful it is for them to be able to go to 'Come and Talk Sessions' (CATS) and 'Fun Club' where they are able to talk to teachers about anything that is troubling them and how to manage situations they find difficult.
- Your leaders nurture confidence and aspiration in your pupils, especially in those with low self-esteem. Leaders are committed to enabling pupils to take responsibility for their own learning, recognising how this increases their motivation so that their attendance improves and they make better progress. Teachers use 'pupil passports' to record the plans pupils make with them and

their parents to help them to do well at school. Pupils state where they need more help and leaders monitor the impact of support pupils receive so that it is effective. You recognise this has helped disabled pupils and those who have special educational needs to make better progress, and are now using this system in a similar way to support disadvantaged pupils.

- You are highly responsive to tackling the barriers to learning for individual pupils. Your procedures, for example to monitor and boost attendance, are rigorous and effective. Overall rates of attendance are improving and the attendance of those who have been regularly absent is getting better.
- You work hard to boost communications with parents and provide a range of opportunities for them to take part in activities in the school, such as the well-received relaxation class. Parents are able to attend 'drop-in' sessions to find out more about life at the school. You are keen to receive feedback from parents and received a large majority of positive responses to a survey you carried out recently. Your staff are persistent and successful in forging better links with parents to ensure pupils with poor attendance are supported well and their attendance improves.
- Governors are clear about their responsibilities and committed to their role. They ensure that their training and their knowledge of the school are thoroughly up to date. They are well placed to support you and scrutinise and challenge your decisions appropriately. The Chair of the Governing Body meets with you frequently. You review safeguarding and the well-being of pupils at your meetings regularly. Governors note that their monitoring role has developed so their visits to the school are structured and productive. They are confident in holding leaders to account. Governors have high expectations that teachers assess pupils' progress regularly. They expect outcomes to be reported to them, so that underachievement is identified and addressed at an early stage.
- All pupils learn Mandarin. They respond enthusiastically to this opportunity. They relish learning more about Chinese culture, forging links with pen friends in China and applying their learning to activities like 'Chinese art week' every year.

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

Leaders and those responsible for governance should ensure that:

- the improvement in the quality of teaching, including the consistency of the use of the school's marking policy, continues so that it is never less than good
- the raised profile of the achievement of groups of pupils continues so that teachers' planning to support and challenge pupils is routine and effective and does not rely too heavily on intervention sessions
- subject leaders develop their leadership skills so that they are well placed to hold teachers to account for the progress made by pupils
- the routine and frequent monitoring of attendance includes groups of pupils to ensure that individuals are not missed.

I am copying this letter to the Chair of the Governing Body, the Regional Schools Commissioner and the Director of Children's Services for Leicestershire County Council. This letter will be published on the Ofsted website.

Yours sincerely

Amanda Carter-Fraser  
**Her Majesty's Inspector**

### **Information about the inspection**

During the inspection, I held meetings with the headteacher; the coordinator for disabled pupils and those who have special educational needs; and the Chair of the Governing Body, the vice-chair and a parent governor. I went on a tour of the school accompanied by the deputy headteacher, visiting all classes to see the learning that was taking place. I looked at examples of pupils' work and held informal conversations with pupils and staff as I toured the school. I met with a group of pupils from Year 1 to Year 5. I reviewed a range of documentation including the single central record, the school's self-evaluation, the school's development plan, the rapid improvement plan and the school's information about pupils' achievement. I observed pupils' behaviour around the school, at breaktimes and during lessons. I looked at the responses to questionnaires completed for the inspection by pupils, staff and parents, as well as the analysis of the school's own survey of parents' views.