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Miss Kate Shepherd
Headteacher
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Dear Miss Shepherd

Short inspection of Cragg Vale Junior and Infant School

Following my visit to the school on 19 October 2016 with Her Majesty's Inspector Kate Rowley, 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 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 acted decisively and effectively to minimise the impact of any uncertainty associated with the future of the school. You have combined this with a very clear and carefully shared vision of high expectations. You and the governing body have not allowed external factors associated with the forthcoming consultation about the future of the school to distract from your central task of providing a high-quality education for the children of the community. Through clear communication and example, you have ensured that all members of the school community keep a careful focus on continuing to improve the outcomes for all pupils.

Working with the governing body, you have put in place comprehensive and systematic procedures for evaluating the quality of the education and overall effectiveness of the school. This means that you and governors have a very clear and accurate view of the strengths and weaknesses of the school and what needs to improve. Your reports to governors are detailed and illuminating: governors respond to them and other information about the school with appropriate levels of challenge. You and governors are very clear that, although outcomes for pupils are good, there is still work to be done if pupils' writing is to develop in its depth, range, accuracy and sophistication, particularly for the most able pupils.

Safeguarding is effective.

There is a culture of safeguarding throughout the school. Safeguarding is of paramount importance to governors and all staff. School policies reflect the latest guidance and the bursar is careful to check that records are up to date. There is regular and effective training for both staff and governors on the safeguarding issues which pupils might face. This means that staff are well prepared to deal with these issues. Governors are very clear and effective in undertaking their responsibilities. There are good links with outside agencies. Referrals to the local authority are made promptly and followed through rigorously.

There are extremely strong links with all parents, and particularly with those who have children who have special educational needs and/or disabilities. There is a culture of strong partnership between the school and parents. This means that decisions about pupils are made with them and their parents, rather than for them.

You and the leadership team have ensured that all safeguarding arrangements are fit for purpose and records are detailed and of high quality.

Inspection findings

- You have successfully addressed the areas for improvement identified at the previous inspection. The school's assessment information and evidence gathered during the inspection show that children's starting points are broadly average when they arrive in Reception. They settle well and make good progress. By the end of the Reception Year, they reach levels of development above those nationally expected. They are well prepared for school. They continue to make progress during Years 1 and 2 with very strong phonics check scores and outcomes by the end of key stage 1.
- Pupils make strong progress throughout key stage 2. Outcomes in both 2015 and 2016 for Year 6 pupils were strong. There are no differences between the outcomes for disadvantaged pupils and others. Pupils who have special educational needs and/or disabilities make good progress from their starting points.
- Teaching assistants are well trained, confident and deployed effectively. They work closely with teachers to plan pupils' work so it matches their needs. Teaching assistants show high levels of skill and responsibility in their work with children and pupils of all abilities. During the inspection, I saw numerous examples of teaching assistants developing children's and pupils' skills through detailed, careful and determined questioning.
- The work in children's and pupils' books and folders is carefully marked in accordance with the whole-school policy. Pupils are used to responding promptly to staff's written feedback about how to improve their work. This increasingly well-established culture of pupils' self-reflection will be very useful as the school improves and deepens the pupils' writing. The school's focus on improving writing is already having a positive impact. For example, during the inspection I saw examples of this year's Year 2

pupils writing at length with growing confidence and accuracy. They were responding eagerly to the teacher's helpful and focused comments.

- There are clear strategies in place for a whole-school approach to spelling. Staff and, increasingly, pupils have a good awareness of new national expectations for spelling and how these can be tackled. The work in pupils' books is generally well presented and neat.
- Teaching is well matched to the ability of the pupils. This is because you have put in place regular and externally moderated assessments of the progress that pupils are making. Staff are then using the increasingly detailed information that you are gathering about individual pupils' progress to focus their teaching on what pupils need to improve and succeed.
- Pupils are happy and know how to keep themselves safe, including when online. They are very well behaved both in class and at lunch and playtimes. They are kind and aware of the needs of others. I saw no examples of low-level disruption.
- Pupils have opportunities to develop their leadership skills through membership of the school council. You regularly seek pupils' views and act on them as necessary and appropriate. Pupils said that they liked the way the school responds to them through regular 'you said...we did' feedback.
- Pupils enjoy coming to school. Attendance is consistently well above the national average.
- You communicate very effectively with parents and families through a range of media including weekly e-mail newsletters and tweets. You have used this regular and varied communication successfully with parents to allay fears about the school's future. They said that they welcomed this and saw it as a real strength of the school.
- You and governors are adept at engaging with partners and using a range of professional colleagues to support and challenge your work. You are an active member of the local 'cluster' of primary schools in the area. This group works together to check standards, develop skills in teaching and provide additional services. For example, you have engaged a specialist to support staff across the cluster in the teaching of pupils who have dyslexia.
- You have forged strong and effective links with the local authority. The authority provides a range of effective support systems. For example, the successful work you have done to improve the effectiveness of teaching assistants stemmed from a local-authority-funded initiative.

Next steps for the school

Leaders and those responsible for governance should ensure that:

- pupils, and in particular the most able pupils, continue to develop the depth and breadth of their writing; not only through writing neatly and spelling accurately but also through a growing awareness of the needs of those for whom they are writing

- they continue to minimise the impact of the uncertainties associated with the future 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 Calderdale. This letter will be published on the Ofsted website.

Yours sincerely

Mark Evans
Her Majesty's Inspector

Information about the inspection

During the inspection, I met with you and your senior teacher and with other members of staff. I met with all seven Year 4 pupils and listened to a number of pupils in key stage 1 read. I visited all classes and spoke with pupils about their work and attitudes to school. You accompanied me on most of these visits and we discussed the impact and quality of teaching. I also met with a group of governors, including the chair of the governing body. I scrutinised documentation including: minutes from governors' meetings, information about pupils' progress, details of attendance and information about safeguarding. I spoke with groups of parents at the start and end of the school day. I observed pupils' behaviour at lunch and playtimes. I visited the after-school Reception/Year 1/Year 2 cookery club where they were making biscuits.

Key lines of enquiry

Building on progress in Reception: have leaders improved the quality of teaching in key stage 1 so that pupils now make good and better progress?

What have leaders done to address the present and historical differences between pupils, including those of the most able, performance in reading and mathematics and their less secure performance in writing, particularly in key stage 2?