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Mr James Blakely
Headteacher
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Dear Mr Blakely

Short inspection of Samlesbury Church of England School

Following my visit to the school on 19 January 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 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 steered the school expertly through a substantial period of change since you were appointed as headteacher. All teachers have joined the team in the last two years and have quickly taken on board your high expectations. As a result, pupils are making stronger progress. The school is a hub at the centre of your community and is held in very high regard. Parents are overwhelmingly positive about your work. As one parent said: 'Samlesbury is a warm, welcoming and brilliant school that has the feel of a big family unit.'

Pupils love coming to school because they feel safe and happy. They are proud to be members of the Samlesbury community. They enjoy their learning and are keen to share what they know, for example about the second world war. It is no surprise that they rarely miss a day of school. There is a warm and calm atmosphere in classrooms, around school and outside. Relationships between staff and pupils are consistently positive and nurturing. Pupils also respect each other. Their behaviour is exemplary.

At the previous inspection, the inspector reported strength in teaching, behaviour and reading. These strengths have been maintained. Reported areas for improvement included:

- the outdoor area in the early years
- more consistency in the teaching of phonics
- improved marking of pupils' work
- pupils having more opportunities to solve mathematical problems in other subjects.

You have invested in the development of the outdoor area for children in the early years, an area which provides similar learning opportunities to those available indoors. Children also enjoy working in an outdoor wooded area. In the early years and in key stage 1, the teaching of phonics is now more consistent. You have changed the organisation of groups of pupils being taught and have developed the skills of support staff, who also provide effective guidance. However, changes are relatively recent and the impact of these changes is yet to be seen. All teachers follow the agreed marking policy of the school and work in pupils' books shows that pupils learn from the feedback given to aid their progress over time. Pupils' work also shows that pupils have opportunities to complete problem-solving activities in mathematics, but we agreed that this is not consistent in all classes.

We discussed the current strengths of the school and the areas you are working to improve. There is particular strength in key stage 2 and pupils' outcomes are much improved. Your improvement plan rightly focuses on improving the quality of teaching in a bid to raise standards further. We agreed that the targets within the plan could be made more clear and easy to measure, so that you and the governors can evaluate your progress over time more readily. We also agreed that your focus on the effective teaching of phonics should be maintained to ensure that the vast majority of pupils quickly acquire the skills of reading.

Safeguarding is effective.

Safeguarding is effective. The single central record is comprehensive and meets current guidance. Thorough checks are completed on adults before they are allowed to work with children. Training is comprehensive both for staff and for governors. As a result, staff know what to do if they have concerns about pupil safety. Vulnerable pupils are monitored closely and swift and effective action is taken to ensure that they are kept safe. All parents expressing a view confirmed that pupils are safe and well looked after. Pupils agree that they feel safe and are kept safe in all aspects of school life.

Termly safeguarding audits, completed by yourself and the safeguarding governor, help to ensure that you remain up to date with practice and procedures. Governors have invested in the safety and security of the site and the building.

Inspection findings

- You and the governing body know the school well, in terms of strengths and areas for improvement. You have a firm grip on monitoring the progress of all groups of pupils and the quality of teaching. Your improvement plans target the areas which will have the strongest impact on improving the school.
- The quality of teaching in key stage 2 is strong. Teachers have high expectations of pupils and relationships between all staff and pupils are consistently positive. Pupils know what they are doing and quickly engage with their learning because teachers offer clear explanations. Teachers use effective questioning to check pupils' understanding and guide them to new learning. Work completed in subjects such as history and geography is at the same high standard as English and mathematics. Published performance information and your own assessments confirm that pupils in key stage 2 are now securing improved outcomes.
- The quality of teaching in key stage 1 and the early years is also strong. Your assessment information and work in pupils' books shows that pupils make good progress over time. The teacher has risen to the challenge of teaching three different year groups in one class. She makes best use of support staff to ensure that pupils' needs are met. Pupils are known very well and regular meetings take place to check on their progress. Where pupils show signs of slower progress, support is provided to help them catch up.
- The most able pupils are provided with tasks which challenge them at an appropriate level. For example, in mathematics there are examples of tasks which require pupils to reason and explain their mathematical thinking. This allows pupils to broaden and deepen their knowledge of the subject.
- The support provided for the very few disadvantaged pupils is effective. Pupils' progress is monitored closely by yourself and the governors in regular meetings. Additional funding helps you to provide support for pupils in class and also to broaden their curriculum experiences. Further assistance is given to help improve the attendance of a minority of disadvantaged pupils.
- Pupils attend school regularly and few pupils are regularly absent. You expect pupils to attend every day and where this does not happen, no time is wasted in contacting parents to find out why. Some parents said that pupils enjoy school so much, they would attend in the holidays if they could.

Next steps for the school

Leaders and those responsible for governance should ensure that:

- targets in improvement plans are more clearly defined so that success can be measured more easily
- a focus is maintained on the quality of phonics teaching so that more pupils meet the standard expected at the end of Year 1.

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

Yours sincerely

Ian Hardman
Her Majesty's Inspector

Information about the inspection

During the inspection, I met with you and the business manager. I met with five members of the governing body, including the chair of the governing body, and spoke with a representative of the local authority. I spoke with five parents who were dropping off pupils at school and considered the responses from 29 parents to Ofsted's online questionnaire, Parent View. I visited all classrooms with you to observe and speak with pupils about their learning. We also scrutinised pupils' books from a range of subjects in each class.

I considered a wide range of documentation and information relating to your self-evaluation, school improvement planning, attendance, governance, assessment, monitoring of teaching and safeguarding.

The school meets requirements on the publication of specified information on its website.