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Mrs Frances Bowman
Headteacher
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Dear Mrs Bowman

Short inspection of Shepley First School

Following my visit to the school on 28 February 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 February 2012.

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 had a big impact since you arrived in May 2016. Your high expectations, clear vision and sharp evaluation of strengths and weaknesses have galvanised staff and governors. They share your ambition to make Shepley First an outstanding school. There have been changes in staff and you have appointed new leaders. You have driven rapid improvement in school systems. You have established robust methods for ensuring consistency and quality in teaching and assessment.

At the time of the last inspection, the school was asked to raise teachers' expectations, make more effective use of assessment data and enable teachers to learn from outstanding practice in other schools. You have prioritised these in your drive for improvement. You have raised the expectations of governors, leaders, teachers and pupils. You have raised the bar for what pupils should achieve in each year group. Your new assessment system is enabling teachers to measure progress more frequently and more precisely. You are analysing data effectively and using it promptly to identify and implement action to tackle any weakness in pupils' progress and any aspect of subject teaching. The school only has one and a half term's data, so you have rightly not yet used this information to inform parents about their child's progress. You are planning to provide parents with this information during this school year.

New subject leaders have risen to your challenge and have benefited from the support, direction and professional development that you have provided. You are outward looking and you have enabled staff to learn from successful schools. You support newly qualified teachers well and they are developing effectively. Staff morale is high.

The teaching of phonics is effective and leads to good outcomes in reading. Your systematic approach to the teaching of writing has raised standards and pupils' written work in English is good. However, pupils do not write at the same frequency, depth or length in other subjects. Leaders are developing the teaching of mathematics carefully and effectively.

Pupils enjoy learning and their life at school. They work with sustained concentration and good application. They want to learn and are keen to achieve. They welcome the frequent and specific feedback from teachers. They act promptly on the guidance they receive and actively improve their work.

Leaders, governors and the local authority are not using assessment effectively enough to prepare pupils for their move to middle school. Your school and the middle schools lack a common method, and an agreed evidence base, for accurately assessing attainment in reading, writing and mathematics at the point of transition at the end of Year 5 to Year 6. You and the local authority are taking initial steps to tackle this issue.

Safeguarding is effective.

The leadership team has ensured that all safeguarding arrangements are fit for purpose. You have created a positive culture for safeguarding in which pupils can talk to adults about any problems they may face. Good communication and positive relationships in school promote a safe and secure environment. Regularly trained staff know how to communicate any concerns. Governors deploy their expertise in safeguarding well. They regularly check the effectiveness of safeguarding procedures and contribute to staff training. Leaders manage safeguarding cases proactively and liaise appropriately with parents. Records of action are detailed and of high quality. Leaders and pupils are sometimes let down by a lack of timely engagement and slow communication by social services. Pupils say they feel safe and parents agree.

Inspection findings

- In the early years, the proportion of children that reached a good level of development was above average in 2015 and 2016. You have recently taken increased account of the assessments by the on-site pre-school setting to set higher expectations for children's progress. Consequently, you have also set higher expectations for the proportion that can exceed a good level of development at the end of Reception. You are working effectively to bring about the improvements in the early years provision that could lead to higher outcomes at the end of Reception.

- Energetic and sharply focused teaching of phonics results in good progress. The proportion of pupils reaching the required standard at the end of Year 1 was above average in 2016.
- In 2016, pupils made expected progress in writing at key stage 1 and attainment was average. A rigorous and systematic approach to writing has ensured that, at key stages 1 and 2, pupils have made accelerated progress this school year and standards of writing and presentation are good.
- Teachers give pupils of different abilities clear direction and detailed guidance on different types of writing and specific forms of grammar. Pupils value the systematic approach to drafting, revising, presenting and assessing their written work. This is enabling pupils to make good progress in the quality, quantity and accuracy of writing, spelling and handwriting in all year groups.
- Pupils make good progress in reading and outcomes were above average at the end of key stage 1 in 2016. Guided reading across the school enables pupils to develop their comprehension skills well. Pupils who have special educational needs and/or disabilities, including in reading, receive effective support. New leaders have made it easier for pupils to find reading books at the right level. The school library is under development.
- In 2016, pupils made expected progress in mathematics at key stage 1 and attainment was average. New leaders are using assessment in mathematics more rigorously. Teachers are providing a more accurate level of challenge in mathematics, including for the most able. Targets for each unit of learning in mathematics are precise; teachers exemplify them well and pupils enjoy the achievement of meeting them.
- Pupils were inspired by a practical science lesson on the digestive system. They learned new terminology, were able to explain the digestive process well and they made thoughtful choices in presenting their written explanation of digestion.
- Your assessment and data tracking system shows increased progress by pupils since last summer. The proportion of pupils at the expected level of achievement for their age has increased in all years, in reading, writing and mathematics. More pupils supported by the pupil premium are at the expected level for their age and more are exceeding the age-related expectations.

Next steps for the school

Leaders and those responsible for governance should:

- improve transition to middle school by agreeing and implementing a common method of assessing the evidence of pupils' attainment in reading, writing and mathematics at the end of Year 5
- ensure that your ambitious targets enable more pupils to reach the high standard for their age group
- ensure that parents are well informed about their child's progress
- extend the good quality of writing in English to other subjects in the curriculum.

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

Yours sincerely

Bernard Campbell
Her Majesty's Inspector

Information about the inspection

I met with you, middle leaders, a group of pupils, three members of the governing body and a representative of the local authority. I jointly observed teaching with you in all classes and we discussed the learning in pupils' work. I also heard pupils read.

I checked the school website and examined a range of documents, including the school's self-evaluation, assessment information, the school development plan, and safeguarding records. I took account of 40 responses from parents, two responses from staff and 16 responses from pupils to the Ofsted online questionnaires.