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Mr Adam Blackwood
Headteacher
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Dear Mr Blackwood

Short inspection of Burton Salmon Community Primary 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 May 2012.

This school continues to be good.

The leadership team has maintained the good quality of education in the school since the last inspection.

The governing body, well supported by the local authority, made a very wise decision in your appointment. You joined the school as a new headteacher in September 2016 and very quickly evaluated what needed to be done to ensure that the school caught up with developments in primary education over the preceding two years. You are systematically tackling the things that need to improve and I could see the positive impact of the changes you have made in the work in pupils' books. Crucially, you have made sure that staff, parents and pupils are moving forward with you. The staff are unanimous in their agreement that the many changes you are introducing are being backed up by effective training along with your direct support.

Parents are overwhelmingly supportive of the school. Those I met spoke positively about the changes you are introducing. They are particularly pleased that you have explained the new curriculum to them so that they understand the new expectations of pupils in different year groups.

Pupils are responding positively to the increased expectations because of the effective approaches to teaching. They are developing more resilience and independence in their learning. For example, they are using prompts and guides

displayed on classroom walls to help them with spelling tricky words.

The number of pupils in your school is growing but it remains very small. This meant that we needed to look closely at individual pupils' progress. In our discussions, our joint visits to lessons and my scrutiny of the school's assessment information, it is clear that the current pupils are making strong gains in their learning. This is also the case for the very small number of pupils who are disadvantaged and those who have special educational needs and/or disabilities.

During visits to lessons, I also took the opportunity to consider the impact you are having on the provision and outcomes for the youngest children. The changed arrangements for playtime mean the outdoor provision has improved considerably, much to the delight of the children. Your plans include opportunities for staff who work with the youngest children to continue to develop their skills in questioning and prompting children's learning when they are using the wonderful resources you have already put in place.

Safeguarding is effective.

Governors make sure that appropriate checks are made on staff and volunteers before they work in school and that the checks are recorded systematically. They ensure that staff are kept up to date with different aspects of safeguarding through regular training. The staff I spoke to know what to do if they are concerned about a pupil. Very wisely, they see poor attendance as a concern that needs to be considered. You seek advice and secure the active involvement of other agencies whenever necessary so that pupils get the support they need.

Pupils say they feel safe in school and that there is very little – some said no – bullying. They also know that as they get older they need to sort out disagreements and falling outs by themselves. They do this confidently as they know that staff will help them if needed.

You quickly addressed some safety concerns arising from car parking arrangements. Symptomatic of your considered approach to changing people's attitudes, you encouraged pupils, as junior road safety officers, to talk with parents and the school's neighbours about the best way to keep them safe at the start and end of the school day.

Inspection findings

- In preparing for the inspection, I decided I would focus on four key aspects of the school's work in addition to how well you have ensured pupils' safety. The first was to check how well you had addressed the area for improvement identified in the last inspection. We jointly visited mathematics lessons in both classes and looked at pupils' mathematics books. It is clear that pupils are being challenged to use their calculation skills to solve problems and to reason mathematically. Some pupils are building up their resilience to keep going when they find problems are difficult. Many relish the chance to solve tricky problems

and find clear ways of explaining their solutions to other pupils.

- I also wanted to check how aspirational you, the staff and governors are for pupils to reach higher standards and work at greater depth than expected for their age. Most pupils start at the school with a level of development that is expected for their age, so it is important that, as a result of good progress, they reach the higher standards by the end key stage 2. Your incisive evaluation of the work of the school identified what needed to be done to ensure that pupils' rate of progress increases. The impact of the training and developments you have put in place is clear to see in the work in pupils' books, especially in their writing. We also discussed the current Year 6 pupils in depth. A higher than typical proportion of this group of pupils have special educational needs. These pupils are making strong progress from their starting points.
- Burton Salmon is a very small community, so I wanted to understand how you and the governors ensure that pupils learn about people from more diverse communities. Over time, governors have made sure pupils get to meet people from different backgrounds and learn about people who have a range of family structures or beliefs. This work had been successful. Pupils, particularly in key stage 2, talked about lesbian and gay people, openly and without any signs of embarrassment, as well as being very clear about racism.
- Finally, I wanted to check that governors have a good grasp of the full range of their duties and share your high aspirations for pupils. The minutes of governing body meetings show their challenge about the pace of change required to introduce the new national curriculum and assessment systems was not as strong as it was in other areas. Governors recognised their focus on securing your appointment was a distraction to this important aspect of their work. However, they are now fully engaged with you in developing staff skills and practice so that higher expectations are achieved by all pupils. They appreciate how you check the work of the staff and report pupils' progress to them. You are working exceptionally hard and introducing many needed changes, so I am recommending that governors keep a close eye on how you manage your workload.
- Governors agreed with your evaluation of the school's effectiveness and the development plan you created. The main plan and the additional plan focusing on improving pupils' writing are appropriate. I saw the positive impact of the work you have already undertaken, especially in the improvements in pupils' writing skills. We discussed the benefits of specifying the difference you want each new activity to have on pupils' progress.
- We also considered how phonics is taught and, importantly, how pupils in all year groups are encouraged to use their phonics knowledge to improve their spelling. You recognised that the action plan you have put in place to improve pupils' writing skills needs to focus more precisely on how well pupils use their phonics knowledge to improve their spelling.

Next steps for the school

Leaders and those responsible for governance should ensure that:

- governors achieve an appropriate balance of challenge and support to the headteacher and all staff, taking particular care to ensure manageable workloads
- when the development plan is reviewed, it is clear how the impact of different activities will be measured
- more consideration is given to how pupils learn to use their knowledge of phonics to improve their spelling.

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

Yours sincerely

Susan Hayter
Her Majesty's Inspector

Information about the inspection

We visited both classes and different groups within classes more than once during the day. During these visits, I spoke with pupils about their learning and looked at the work in their books. I also listened to them read their writing aloud to the class and read the written instructions on their work. I also talked with pupils during playtime.

I talked with parents as they arrived at school with their children and considered the 14 responses to Parent View, Ofsted's online survey, including nine written comments.

I met with three governors, including the chair of the governing body, and the three teachers. I also considered the views of the other six members of staff as they all responded to the online staff survey. In addition, I met with a representative of the local authority.

Teachers, you and I reviewed pupils' mathematics and English books. I also reviewed a wide range of documents relating to all aspects of the school's work.