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Mrs Jenny Kennedy  
Headteacher  
Burscough Bridge Methodist School  
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Dear Mrs Kennedy

### **Short inspection of Burscough Bridge Methodist School**

Following my visit to the school on 08 March 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 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.

There have been some changes in that time. There was a series of short-term associate headteachers until you became the permanent part-time headteacher in September 2015, working an average of two and a half days per week. Your deputy headteacher, who has been at the school for several years and knows it well, leads the school on the days when you are not present. The arrangement has brought greater stability and is effective, as you have sustained good standards at the school and made a number of recent improvements. Pupils say they enjoy coming to school and parents are highly positive, commenting that they feel that you and your staff know their children well and that you have created a 'happy family'.

You and your staff team have redesigned the outdoor environment in the early years, so that there is better use of the space available. There are now improved facilities for children to climb and balance, thus developing their physical skills more effectively, and there are more opportunities for them to understand the world around them through, for example, water play.

You and your staff have raised the profile of reading in the school by developing a permanent library area and stocking it with a varied range of attractive new books. You have plans to open this each morning before school starts, so that parents and

pupils together can enjoy choosing books to borrow. Pupils read well and say they enjoy reading, with the most able showing high levels of comprehension and lower-ability pupils effectively using their knowledge of phonics to read unfamiliar words. Your work to promote reading in the school has contributed to pupils' positive attitudes to it.

You have introduced more rigorous checks on the quality of teaching and on the progress that pupils make. You observe lessons and feed back strengths and areas for development. You set targets for teachers that relate to pupils' achievement and the development of their own professional skills and you provide training to support them. You regularly evaluate teachers' work to make sure they are meeting their targets. These actions have a positive effect on the quality of teaching, which is evident in the sustained good progress that pupils make.

Since your arrival, there have been changes to the membership of the governing body. This has resulted in a revitalised group that provides strong challenge to you and your team, asking searching questions about subjects such as academic standards and financial matters. Governors understand the school's strengths and areas for development. They want the best for the school and, as one put it, they are 'ambitious to improve all the time'.

You receive useful support from the local authority, although the level of support is light because there are no pressing issues in the school that require attention. The local authority adviser has a good appreciation of the quality of education that the school provides and recognises the injection of energy that your arrival has brought.

At the last inspection, the school's area for improvement included regularly involving pupils in reviewing their own learning. Teachers now consistently follow the school's feedback and marking system, which allows pupils to assess their own work periodically and gives time for them to respond to comments and to understand how to improve.

You have also analysed recently published assessment information and have rightly focused on accelerating progress in mathematics and reading, as well as improving attendance for disadvantaged pupils. You have planned actions to bring about continuing improvements. These include identifying and tackling pupils' weaker areas in reading and securing accelerated progress in mathematics through closer tracking of pupils' progress and consistent application of the school's 'next step' feedback policy. Consequently, current pupils make strong progress in these areas and attendance for all pupils, including those who are disadvantaged, has improved since 2016. You acknowledge, however, that your plans do not include precise statements of the intended impact of your actions on pupils' achievement.

### **Safeguarding is effective.**

The leadership team has ensured that all safeguarding arrangements are fit for purpose and records are detailed and of high quality. You make thorough checks on staff who work at the school and the building and grounds are secure.

There is a strong culture of safeguarding in the school. Pupils know about different types of bullying but they say it very rarely happens. Pupils also know how to keep themselves safe when they are using the internet because you regularly give them information about the potential risks. All staff and governors have received appropriate training in safeguarding and they are knowledgeable about different forms of abuse and the signs that could indicate them.

### **Inspection findings**

- You make effective use of the pupil premium funding you receive. You provide support, such as extra teaching assistants who help to ensure disadvantaged pupils acquire the knowledge, understanding and skills they need in English and mathematics. Recently published assessment information indicates that the progress of disadvantaged pupils was a strength of the school. Evidence from the school's own assessment and from work seen in pupils' books shows that this group continues to make good progress.
- Published assessment information for 2016 suggests that the proportion of lowest-ability pupils in key stage 1 achieving the expected standard in reading and in writing was significantly below the national averages. However, all the pupils in this small group had special educational needs and/or disabilities that prevented them from reaching the expected attainment standard. There is clear evidence in books and in the school's internal assessment information that these pupils are currently making good progress from their low starting points.
- It is also clear that the current pupils in key stage 1 are progressing well in reading and writing. For example, in Year 1, pupils move on from writing simple sentences such as 'I went to spn (Spain) to see miyh (my) nana' to more adventurous examples, like 'His behaiwyer (behaviour) is horrible and mean!' which involve plausible attempts to spell harder words and more advanced punctuation. However, I noticed occasional inconsistencies in providing sufficiently challenging work in writing in key stage 1 and lower key stage 2.
- You have successfully addressed some weaknesses in attainment in reading and mathematics in key stage 2 among middle-ability children. Current pupils make good progress and are acquiring appropriate knowledge, understanding and skills. In mathematics in Year 6, for example, pupils start the year working on place value but quickly move on to using negative numbers and solving problems involving prime numbers.
- In my preparation before the start of the inspection of the school, I evaluated your website to check that it complied with regulations. Following my visit, there are still some omissions concerning admission arrangements and information about the curriculum. You and the governors are aware of these issues and you have undertaken to rectify them.

## **Next steps for the school**

Leaders and those responsible for governance should ensure that:

- they include precise statements in the school's plans for improvement about how the actions they take will have a positive impact on pupils' achievement
- teachers consistently provide work in writing that challenges pupils according to their abilities
- the school's website is compliant and regular checks are carried out to make sure it remains so.

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

Yours sincerely

Mark Quinn  
**Her Majesty's Inspector**

## **Information about the inspection**

I carried out short visits with you to all year groups, including the early years. I scrutinised a range of documentation, including the school's self-evaluation summary, action plans for school improvement, records of the monitoring and evaluation of teaching and learning, minutes of meetings of the governing body and records connected with the safeguarding of children. I held discussions and conversations with members of staff, governors, parents and pupils. I also had discussions with a representative from the local authority. I listened to pupils read and analysed pupils' work. I evaluated 15 responses received through 'Parent View', Ofsted's online survey. There were no other survey responses.