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Mr Mark Harrison
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Dear Mr Harrison

Short inspection of Blacko Primary School

Following my visit on 22 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 January 2012.

This school continues to be good.

The leadership team has maintained the good quality of education in the school since the last inspection. Under your dedicated leadership, there is an ambitious vision, team spirit and a drive for continual improvement. A culture of professional learning is evident. Staff are committed to researching new and effective ways to help pupils to learn well. They value the opportunities that they have to learn from each other and from effective practice in other schools. Staff and governors model the values that are at the heart of the school – a passion for learning within a caring and nurturing community.

You and your team have taken effective action to address the areas for improvement since the last inspection and you have also improved other aspects of the school's provision and outcomes for pupils. Senior leaders know what needs to be done to improve and ensure that actions are focused on the right areas. You recognise, however, that improvement plans do not always have clear timescales and measurable targets for improvement. As a result, leaders, including governors, cannot easily check the extent to which, or how quickly, the school is meeting key priorities and further improving pupils' outcomes.

Your governors are highly skilled and knowledgeable. They demonstrate a strong commitment to the pupils and to supporting the staff and leaders. They check out the accuracy of the information given to them by visiting classes and meeting with leaders. They effectively challenge and support the school's work, asking relevant and searching questions at meetings and holding you and your leaders to account

for the school's performance. However, the school's website is not compliant; some information is missing and a number of policies are not up to date. You and the governors recognise the need for regular checks to ensure that the website information meets requirements.

Your pupils enjoy learning and want to come to school. They are polite and respectful. They move around the school calmly and are courteous to those they meet. They are excellent ambassadors for the school, receiving compliments whenever they are out on visits. Pupils' behaviour in lessons is exemplary. They listen attentively to their teachers and work with maturity during lessons. In discussions, they express their views clearly and listen carefully to each other's ideas. Adults in school act as excellent role models for pupils, instilling the need for kindness and respect. Strong positive relationships exist between pupils, parents and school staff. Parents hold the school in high regard. They appreciate the strong 'family atmosphere' and the core values that underpin school life. Comments from parents included, 'I can't speak highly enough of the teaching and support staff; they are warm, friendly and approachable, yet inspire the children to learn too.'

Safeguarding is effective.

You and your governors place a high priority on keeping pupils safe. You ensure that all safeguarding arrangements are fit for purpose and that records are suitably detailed and of good quality. Leaders know how to recruit staff safely and follow statutory guidelines conscientiously. The knowledge and skills of staff are regularly updated. Leaders check that staff understand and follow their policies and procedures correctly. You work effectively with outside agencies to reduce any potential risk to pupils and to keep them safe.

Pupils' attendance is above the national average and punctuality is good because pupils are keen to attend. Leaders work well with individual families to provide support and promote regular attendance. You ensure that pupils are taught to keep themselves safe, for example when working online on the computer. In discussions, pupils demonstrated a clear understanding of how to keep themselves safe when using the internet.

Inspection findings

- Since the last inspection, standards at the end of both key stages 1 and 2 have been consistently higher than national averages in reading, writing and mathematics. The results of the Year 1 phonics screening check have been equally positive and in 2016, all pupils attained the expected standard. As a result, pupils in key stage 1 are equipped well with key reading and writing skills to support the next stage of their learning.
- In 2016, none of the Year 6 boys attained a high standard in reading, writing or in grammar, punctuation and spelling. You have correctly identified that, throughout the school, boys do not do as well as girls, particularly at the higher attainment levels. As a result, you have put in place a range of strategies in all year groups to support boys' learning. These strategies have been carefully

monitored and have shown that boys are making accelerated progress. Information from current school tracking shows that the most able boys are now on track to attain the high standard at the end of key stage 2 in reading, writing and in grammar, punctuation and spelling.

- In the previous inspection report you were asked to ensure that the most able pupils were sufficiently challenged in each lesson. Lesson observations and a check of pupils' books showed that pupils of different abilities are provided with learning tasks that are well matched to their needs. In addition, there are clear and high expectations for what each group needs to learn in each lesson. Good guidance for pupils helps them to improve their work and highlights their next steps for learning.
- The curriculum has evolved under your leadership and has been enriched with a wealth of first-hand visits and experiences. You and your staff thoughtfully consider the interests of pupils when planning the curriculum. Pupils spoke enthusiastically about a recent barge trip on the Liverpool/Leeds canal and a visit from their local Member of Parliament. In mathematics, they enjoyed tasting chocolate from around the world and presenting their data in bar charts. High-quality classroom displays celebrate pupils' writing linked to history, geography, art and science projects. Pupils study the main religions found in Britain and learn how democracy works. You and your staff are preparing them well for life in modern Britain.
- The leadership of subjects, other than English and mathematics, has been a recent focus for school improvement. Your curriculum leader is implementing a clear and consistent process to ensure that all subject leaders monitor their area of responsibility effectively. However, you are aware that, as yet, not all subject leaders are as fully involved as they could be in checking the quality of teaching and learning in their areas of responsibility and that tracking and assessment procedures in these subjects are not secure.
- The leader for pupils who have special educational needs and/or disabilities is passionate about doing the best for her pupils. She has a good knowledge of the needs of the pupils and ensures that funding is spent wisely. She liaises effectively with parents, pupils, teachers and external agencies to ensure that support programmes meet their needs. As a result of the high-quality provision they receive, they make good progress.
- You have implemented effective systems to meet the needs of disadvantaged pupils. You monitor closely the support that the school gives these pupils to ensure that they make the best possible progress and, if need be, catch up to their peers.

Next steps for the school

Leaders and those responsible for governance should ensure that:

- the school improvement plan is more sharply focused, with clear success criteria and measurable outcomes so that governors can monitor progress more effectively

- the website is compliant and that leaders and governors are involved in a regular cycle of reviewing key school policies
- subject leadership is developed to ensure that the outcomes from the monitoring of teaching and learning in all subject areas have a positive impact on pupils' progress.

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

Aleksandra Hartshorne
Ofsted Inspector

Information about the inspection

I met with you, your assistant headteacher and the leader for science to discuss the impact of actions you are taking to raise standards across the school. You accompanied me on a visit to classes, where we observed the teaching of writing, and looked at some work in pupils' books. I met with three governors and with a representative of the local authority. I observed the lunchtime arrangements and spoke with two welfare staff. I spoke with a group of pupils from Reception to Year 6 and took account of 28 responses to Ofsted's online survey, Parent View. I considered your school's website, your self-evaluation report, your school improvement plan and information about the achievement of current pupils. I also reviewed some pupils' workbooks from different year groups. I considered the school's safeguarding arrangements, including the checks made on adults who work at the school.