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Miss Elizabeth Hargreaves
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Dear Miss Hargreaves

Short inspection of Feniscowles Primary School

Following my visit on 23 May 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 November 2012.

This school continues to be good

The leadership team has maintained the good quality of education in the school since the last inspection. This is a testament to the strength and capacity to improve that you have established among the senior leaders. During your absence in the autumn term, they continued to enhance the curriculum, bringing about effective change to ensure that the rate of improvement did not falter. There is a willingness among these leaders to embrace change. Leaders and governors have accurately identified the strengths and weaknesses of the school. However, we agreed that the evaluation of the actions taken to improve the school is not clear enough to enable governors to ask the most probing questions about the school's effectiveness.

Pupils are happy. Teachers welcome them into spacious classrooms that have colourful displays. The stimulating environment is busy and purposeful. Pupils' conduct is very good, due to the strong relationships that they have with the adults in the school. Pupils bristle with energy and enthusiasm for their learning. They are a delight to talk to.

The last inspection team asked the school to provide more opportunities for pupils to think and learn independently. This is now evident in the way pupils work well together, supporting each other's learning through high-quality discussions. However, there is still more work to do in the early years to

enhance the quality of children's independent learning. At the last inspection, the school was also asked to provide the most able pupils with harder work. The school's most recent results are very positive, particularly for the most able, with progress in writing being very strong. You have highlighted the achievement of pupils in mathematics as an area for further improvement and as such this formed a key line of inquiry for this inspection.

Safeguarding is effective

The leadership team has ensured that all safeguarding arrangements are fit for purpose. Records are detailed and of high quality. You have ensured that the school's safeguarding culture is one of vigilance. Staff are clear about their responsibilities and how to respond to any safeguarding concerns. Governors prioritise this area by undertaking extensive training, including training on preventing radicalisation and extremism. The result is that there are tight procedures in place, with timely responses to any concerns.

When asked if they felt safe in school, pupils emphatically agreed that they did. They have a very good awareness of how to keep themselves safe, including when online, and are confident to approach staff with any concerns that they have. Pupils are aware that staff take decisive action when there is the possibility of bullying and agree that this rarely happens. Parents are positive about the school. Staff work well with other agencies to support pupils' needs.

Inspection findings

- As part of the inspection, we agreed on three key lines of enquiry. The first was to look at how effective teachers are in challenging pupils to achieve the highest standards in key stage 2 mathematics. The mathematics leader is very passionate about her subject and improving outcomes for pupils. Indeed, the school's prior attainment in 2014 and 2015 shows clear improvements in the attainment of the highest standards. The impact of the new curriculum has been managed smoothly through staff training. Teachers' assessments are accurate and are used to inform their planning. Where teaching is most effective, pupils understand what they are learning because of the clear instructions that they are given by their teacher. The result is that pupils make good progress from their starting points. The most able pupils are provided with extension activities. However, you have already identified that some of the most able and most able disadvantaged pupils could be challenged even further by applying their mathematics skills to problems of greater complexity. This is borne out by the work in pupils' books, school progress data and the response of the most able pupils, many of whom say that they would welcome further challenge in their work.
- The second line of enquiry was to look at how leaders have improved provision in the early years to raise children's attainment, which has risen consistently over the last three years. The early years leader has a very good grasp of the strengths and weaknesses in provision. The actions she has implemented have ensured that teacher-led activities support children's learning effectively. Staff have received training on the quality of their

interactions with children, which now engage children in learning with greater focus. The children's books and learning journeys chart good progress from their starting points. Children are aware that this half term they are focusing upon 'perseverance', and all children understand what this means. In practice, they show this when on task, for example a table of boys who were working on their creative learning. They worked in silence with only occasional comments to each other so that they could focus on completing their tasks, which they stuck at for some time. The early years lead has accurately identified that the quality of adult interactions is ready to extend beyond instruction. We both recognise that adults need to question children's understanding more directly and fire their curiosity. You and I are also in agreement that children need to develop their learning in independent activities by taking calculated risks and exploring for themselves.

- The final key line of enquiry was to explore how effectively leaders use funding for disadvantaged pupils to support their progress and attainment in mathematics. The statement on the use of the pupil premium is clear. However, this plan does not set clear criteria by which success can be measured. The school's progress data shows positive progress for disadvantaged pupils from their starting points. Some of these disadvantaged pupils also have special educational needs and/or disabilities. Leaders use this information well to target pupils. High-quality interventions and effective support for the most able disadvantaged pupils were evident during the inspection. The work in pupils' mathematics books also shows good progress. However, the most able disadvantaged pupils have few opportunities to practise their mathematics skills at the highest level.

Next steps for the school

Leaders and those responsible for governance should ensure that:

- the school's plans for development, at all levels, provide clear measures of success to enable governors to ask more probing questions
- teachers provide further challenge for some of the most able and most able disadvantaged pupils in mathematics by ensuring that they use their skills to solve more complex problems
- the development of adults' questioning and interactions with pupils in the early years encourages a greater quality of independent learning.

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

Yours sincerely

Steve Bentham
Her Majesty's Inspector

Information about the inspection

- I met with leaders to discuss safeguarding arrangements, school development and self-evaluation, and how the school has improved since the previous inspection.
- I spoke to pupils, both formally and informally, throughout the inspection about their work and a range of areas of school life.
- I conducted a scrutiny of key stage 2 pupils' mathematics books.
- I heard pupils from Year 2, Year 4 and Year 6 read.
- I reviewed documentation, which included the school's pupil premium statement, records of the school's monitoring of teaching and learning, staff appraisal documents, the school's evaluation of its strengths and weaknesses, the school's development plan and its most recent information about the progress of pupils in mathematics.
- I considered 57 responses to Ofsted's online survey, Parent View, and nine responses to Ofsted's staff questionnaire.
- I visited the early years and key stage 2 classes, along with you and other senior leaders, to observe pupils' learning.
- I met with the early years, mathematics and pupil premium leaders to discuss improvements in their areas of responsibility.
- I met with governors to discuss safeguarding and aspects of the school's leadership and management.
- I met with a representative from Blackburn with Darwen local authority to discuss school effectiveness.
- I reviewed a range of documentation about safeguarding, including the school's record of checks undertaken on newly appointed staff. I also looked at the school's logs of behaviour and bullying incidents.