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Mrs Sharon Charlesworth
Headteacher
Rawtenstall St Paul's Church of England Primary School
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Dear Mrs Charlesworth

Short inspection of Rawtenstall St Paul's Church of England Primary School

Following my visit to the school on 19 July 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. You have quickly established yourself in the role of headteacher since you took up your position in January 2017. You are highly visible in the daily life of the school and have won the trust of staff, parents and pupils.

This is an inclusive and caring school. The school's motto, 'engage, inspire and achieve', is at the heart of everyone's work. You have successfully developed a culture of high expectations underpinned by support and challenge. You have a committed team of staff who work together well. All of the staff who responded to the online survey say that they are proud to work in the school. One teacher commented: 'Our children are as precious to us as our families.'

You are ambitious for pupils and want to give them the best start in life. Pupils' progress is now monitored every half term. This has enabled leaders to focus more sharply on the progress being made by pupils and support those who need extra help.

Pupils say that they enjoy coming to school. A typical comment from pupils is: 'Everyone is nice and we help each other.' Relationships between staff and pupils are very positive. Pupils are polite, respectful and proud of their school. They manage themselves well during social times and enjoy the wealth of opportunities

to play at break and lunchtime in the well-supervised play areas.

You have designed a creative curriculum with a focus on the application of skills and complemented by memorable learning experiences. For example, work in the outdoor area enables pupils to broaden and deepen their knowledge and skills in science. Extra-curricular activities abound and contribute greatly to pupils' personal development. Pupils relish the opportunity to participate in sport, drama, trips and an annual residential visit.

Governors are dedicated to the school. One governor commented: 'This is a family school. We treat every child as an individual.' Governors support and challenge leaders in equal measure. They regularly check that the school's safeguarding procedures are up to date. Governors have a clear understanding of the needs of the school. They know how well different groups of pupils achieve, including disadvantaged pupils.

The local authority supports you and other leaders effectively, for example by ensuring that your evaluation of the school is accurate.

All the parents I spoke to, and the overwhelming majority of those who responded to Parent View, Ofsted's online questionnaire, were very positive about the school. As one parent commented: 'Teachers know my child exceptionally well and provide excellent teaching.'

At the previous inspection, the inspectors asked you to provide more opportunities for staff to share good practice and ensure that pupils made faster progress in their writing. Since the last inspection, teachers have been provided with many opportunities to learn from each other as well as from colleagues in local schools. You have given writing a higher profile across the school. Pupils enjoy writing activities and this helps them to make good progress. However, you acknowledge that pupils have limited opportunities to practise their writing skills across the curriculum.

Safeguarding is effective.

There is a strong culture of keeping pupils safe in school. Leaders have ensured that safeguarding arrangements are fit for purpose. Records are detailed and of high quality. There are comprehensive procedures in place for the recruitment and selection of staff. Visitors' credentials are closely checked. Appropriate training ensures that staff have up-to-date knowledge of safeguarding and are vigilant about the potential risks that pupils may face. Vulnerable pupils and their families are supported very well.

Pupils say that bullying is rare. They are taught about how to stay safe online. Parents and pupils feel that the school is a safe place to be.

Inspection findings

- The inspection focused on a number of key lines of enquiry, the first of which related to attendance. Pupils enjoy coming to school and this is shown by their above-average attendance. However, absence and persistent absence for disadvantaged pupils and those pupils who have special educational needs and/or disabilities have been higher than those of other pupils in the past. You have identified the reasons for this and ensure that any unexplained absences are followed up in a timely manner. Leaders encourage parents to make sure that pupils get to school on time. The pupil premium funding supports eligible pupils to attend breakfast club. As a result of these initiatives, the attendance of disadvantaged pupils and pupils who have special educational needs and/or disabilities has increased alongside a reduction in their persistent absenteeism.
- Pupils' progress in mathematics at the end of key stage 2 in 2016, was below the national average. You have introduced a range of initiatives to improve this. You have brokered specialist advisory support which has improved teachers' subject knowledge and confidence. Pupils are now benefiting from stronger teaching, and their work shows a good understanding of problem-solving. Current assessment information shows that this is having a positive impact on their progress. Attainment has improved on last year and is now above the national average. However, you have correctly identified that reasoning in mathematics is an area for further development.
- In 2016, disadvantaged pupils did not make enough progress in reading, writing and mathematics at the end of key stage 1. You know these pupils well and understand the barriers to learning that they have. The pupil premium funding is used effectively to provide extra teaching sessions to help disadvantaged pupils catch up in reading, writing and mathematics.
- Since the last inspection, you have focused on ensuring that pupils make the best possible progress in their writing. The standards that pupils achieved at the end of key stage 2 show that you have been successful in this aim. In 2016 and 2017, the proportion of pupils achieving the expected standard has been above the national average. You have strengthened the moderation of pupils' work. Pupils' books show that they are able to vary their sentence structure and write at length. However, you recognise that pupils do not have enough opportunities to develop their writing skills across the curriculum.
- My final line of enquiry was related to the progress of the most able pupils. Most-able pupils did not perform as well as their peers nationally at the higher levels in reading, writing and mathematics at the end of key stage 1 or key stage 2 in 2016. In response to this, you have raised expectations for the most able pupils and you hold focused meetings to discuss their progress. My scrutiny of pupils' work and my discussions with pupils in lessons indicate that most of the activities set by teachers are closely matched to the ability of the pupils. However, we agreed that the most able pupils are not sufficiently challenged by the tasks that they are given in lower key stage 2.

Next steps for the school

Leaders and those responsible for governance should ensure that:

- they further improve pupils' writing including through increasing opportunities to write across the full range of subjects
- the teaching of mathematics in key stage 2 allows pupils to develop their reasoning skills more effectively
- the most able pupils in lower key stage 2 are challenged more rigorously so that they can reach the highest standards.

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

Yours sincerely

Ahmed Marikar
Her Majesty's Inspector

Information about the inspection

During this short inspection I met with you, a group of senior and middle leaders, and teachers. I met with five governors including the chair of the governing body. I also met with a representative from the local authority. I met with eight pupils from key stage 2 and spoke to others during breaktimes. I visited a number of classes where I observed teaching and learning, looked at pupils' work and spoke to pupils. I also heard pupils from Year 2 and Year 5 read. I carried out a scrutiny of pupils' work across the school.

I spoke with parents as they dropped their children off at school. I took account of 68 responses to Parent View, the Ofsted online questionnaire, including 65 free-text responses. I also considered the views of 17 staff through Ofsted's online questionnaire. No responses were received to the online questionnaire for pupils. I looked at a range of documentation, including the school's self-evaluation and information about pupils' attainment and progress. I also evaluated safeguarding procedures, including: policies to keep children safe; records of training; safeguarding checks; and attendance and behaviour information. I also undertook a review of the school's website.