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Miss Emily Kirk  
Headteacher  
Gaskell Community Primary School  
Thomas Holden Street  
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Dear Miss Kirk

### **Short inspection of Gaskell Community Primary School**

Following my visit to the school on 20 September 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 your school was judged to be good in June 2013.

#### **This school continues to be good.**

The leadership team has maintained the good quality of education in the school since the last inspection. Your leadership of the school is highly effective. Staff speak highly of you and respect you greatly. They are proud to work in the school and want the best for all pupils. Staff, including those who are new to the teaching profession, talk positively about all aspects of the school, including the support they receive to further develop their knowledge and skills.

Gaskell Primary is a happy, thriving and nurturing environment for all. Typically, pupils say that they are expected to work hard and that they are confident about their future. Pupils are very keen to learn and the standard of behaviour within classrooms at the time of the inspection was impeccable. Respect for all is evident across school.

The curriculum is carefully planned to offer your pupils many opportunities to develop their talents and self-confidence. For example, pupils are able to play in the school's brass band, work with a local artist, learn Spanish and take part in acting workshops. These rich learning opportunities support pupils' achievement and promote their enjoyment of school. I was very impressed by the learning environment in the school. Displays on walls were purposeful and celebrate the broad and varied curriculum on offer. I was not surprised to hear that you have many visitors to the school to learn from this successful aspect of your work.

Although only a small number of parents responded to the Ofsted online

questionnaire, a group of parents came in to school to meet with me. They talked about how welcoming the school is even when there was a problem to be solved. They knew that you always make time for them. Their views were supported by the evidence you have collected on parents' views.

You have the support and confidence of the local authority and your governing body. Governors are fully aware of the school's strengths and areas for improvement. They offer you support and challenge in equal measure. Governors make a positive contribution to the school's success.

You act quickly when needed to deal with any areas of underperformance. For example, the use of pupil premium funding to provide additional support for pupils is well targeted. It has made a positive difference to the outcomes for disadvantaged pupils at the end of key stage 2 in writing and mathematics.

You have tackled the areas for improvement from the previous inspection effectively. More children are gaining a good level of development at the end of Reception due to the stronger focus you place on early mathematical and language skills. You have made the quality of teaching and learning a priority for all leaders, ensuring that staff receive relevant training and helpful feedback on their teaching practice. This has led to a consistent approach to teaching and accounts for the improvement in pupils' outcomes.

During the inspection we agreed there are two areas that need further work. These relate to adults' questioning skills in the early years, and a greater focus on pupils' language skills to lift outcomes in reading, especially in key stage 2. These areas were no surprise to you or your leaders. Action is already under way to tackle these relatively weaker aspects of the school.

### **Safeguarding is effective.**

The single central record is fully compliant and safeguarding documentation is detailed and of high quality. The school site is secure and entry to it is carefully organised and visitors' credentials are checked thoroughly.

Your staff have been trained well. They have a good understanding of the safeguarding procedures in school and they know how to spot safeguarding issues, for example, female genital mutilation and child sexual exploitation. Governors play an active role in ensuring safeguarding processes are fit for purpose. You use the advice and guidance from outside agencies well to support staff, pupils and their families when safeguarding issues emerge.

Pupils say that they feel safe in school and they know they will always have their problems solved by their teachers. Pupils spoke knowledgeably about the importance of being safe online. Pupils have a good awareness of the different forms of bullying. They were quite emphatic that bullying does not happen in 'our school'. Inspection evidence confirms their opinion; for example, the playground is a harmonious environment where pupils play and socialise happily. Pupils learn about

healthy relationships and being healthy through the curriculum. The school's careful approach to protecting pupils and preparing them for their future lives is shown in the recent safeguarding training and workshops with Years 5 and 6.

### **Inspection findings**

- There is a positive upward trend in the proportion of children who reach a good level of development by the time they leave Reception. Nonetheless, this figure remains below the national average. Children enjoy their time in the early years. I observed confident children who were engaged in a variety of activities that sparked their interest. They cooperate with their classmates and they sustain their concentration in order to complete tasks. Adults support children's learning well. Some adults ask good questions which move children's learning on at a pace. However, this is not consistently strong practice for all of the adults who work with the younger children.
- The proportion of pupils meeting the Year 1 phonics screening check has improved considerably over time and is almost at a par with the national average. The teaching of phonics is organised very well throughout the key stage 1 classrooms. Effective teaching of phonics helps younger children to gain an understanding of the sounds that letters make.
- The quality of teaching in key stage 1 has improved since the previous inspection. Teachers' high expectations, good questioning skills and the positive relationships they foster with pupils all aid the strong progress which is evident in pupils' books. Teaching assistants are deployed well to help those pupils who fall behind or find learning more difficult. This is making a difference to pupils' outcomes. Standards at the end of Year 2 are rising each year, especially in writing and mathematics.
- The 2017 unvalidated data indicates that the improving trend in writing and mathematics is being maintained. Although improving, including for disadvantaged pupils, reading outcomes remain lower than writing and mathematics, especially by the end of key stage 2. You have already begun to tackle this issue, introducing a new way of teaching reading and building pupils' vocabulary so they can access different types of books. Pupils report that they enjoy reading and appreciate the support they receive from adults.
- You promote pupils' attendance well. You and your staff offer help and support when and where it is needed. You explain to parents the impact that poor attendance has on pupils' progress. Any unexplained absences are followed up quickly. Since the last inspection, attendance has remained a high priority and the school has maintained attendance figures very close to the national average.

### **Next steps for the school**

Leaders and those responsible for governance should ensure that:

- the recent improvements to raise pupils' achievement in reading are further built upon, especially in key stage 2.

- the quality of questioning by adults is developed in the early years to extend children's learning and increase the proportion who gain a good level of development by the end of Reception.

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

Yours sincerely

Christine Howard  
**Ofsted Inspector**

### **Information about the inspection**

During the inspection, I held meetings with you, senior leaders, middle leaders and members of the governing body. I had informal discussions with staff and pupils to seek their views of the school and I met with a group of parents. I went on a tour of the school accompanied by you to see the learning that was taking place. I looked at examples of pupils' work and observed pupils' behaviour during lessons, as pupils moved around the school and in the playground. I spoke to pupils about their reading. I reviewed a range of documentation, including safeguarding information, the single central record, the school's self-evaluation and records relating to the monitoring of teaching and learning.