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Mrs Karen Stephens
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Dear Mrs Stephens

Short inspection of Buckshaw Primary School

Following my visit to the school on 19 October 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 October 2012.

This school continues to be good.

The leadership team has maintained the good quality of education in the school since the last inspection. Leaders and governors know the school well. You use this information to produce school improvement plans that will help to move the school forward. The leadership team and governors worked hard to maintain the quality of teaching during unavoidable staff absence. However, this disruption for Year 2 in 2015 contributed to the dip in standards seen at key stage 1 in 2016. Leaders and governors have ensured that these issues have been addressed. Governors are committed to the school and have ensured that they have the necessary skills to support and challenge leaders effectively.

Leaders and governors have taken effective action to address the areas for improvement identified at the previous inspection. Leaders have developed the way in which they use information about how well pupils are doing. There are clear systems in place to check on what pupils know and can do in reading, writing, mathematics, science and physical education. Leaders and teachers use these ongoing checks carefully to identify pupils who might need extra support or challenge. This is having a positive impact, particularly for lower-achieving pupils. However, this system of checking and monitoring is at its early stages in art, history and geography, and leaders recognise that there is more to do.

Pupils benefit from good teaching at all levels. Staff use their good subject knowledge to ensure that they match teaching to pupils' needs. Consequently, most

pupils, including those who have special educational needs and/or disabilities, make good progress from their starting points across a range of subjects. Teachers check on what pupils know and can do during lessons and change their teaching as a result. This is particularly effective in English lessons. However, in some classes, teachers do not move pupils on quickly enough when the work is too easy. Other adults are used effectively to support pupils both in class and for additional support when identified.

Children start school with skills and abilities that are below those typical for their age. They make good progress and leave at the end of Year 6 at least in line with national averages. However, a smaller proportion than the national average are reaching the higher standards in reading, writing and mathematics. In mathematics, leaders acknowledge that adults do not consistently challenge the middle-attaining and most-able pupils to think mathematically. Teachers do not work consistently with pupils to investigate numbers and number patterns or to explain their mathematical thinking. Leaders are beginning to address this.

You are not complacent and recognise that you can do more to increase pupils' progress in writing. The teaching and application of grammar, punctuation and spelling is inconsistent across the school. This lack of consistency has hampered pupils' progress in writing in the past. However, current books show a greater attention to this aspect of pupils' writing. Pupils at key stage 1 use a limited choice of vocabulary within their writing and sometimes activities limit opportunities to write at the higher standards.

Parents are supportive of the school. While a very small minority expressed concerns about bullying, there was no evidence found during the inspection to support this. Attendance has improved because of the school's tireless efforts to ensure that pupils attend regularly.

The carefully planned curriculum includes a focus on pupils' health and safety. As a result, pupils know how to keep themselves safe. Teachers show pupils how to stay safe on the road and what to do in an emergency. Teachers also ensure that pupils know how to stay safe online. Pupils in Year 6 produce posters to remind other pupils about this. Pupils experience a breadth of work that prepares them well for life in modern Britain. They develop a good knowledge and understanding of a variety of world faiths, and adults promote British values well. However, pupils have a limited knowledge of wider world cultures.

Pupils are polite and well mannered. They were happy to talk to me about their work. They behave well at all times. Pupils say behaviour is good and that teachers sort out any problems quickly. Pupils value the support given by the teachers and are confident to ask for help when they need it. They say that, 'Teachers tell us to try our best, and we do!' The belief in providing a safe, secure and nurturing environment for all pupils shines through. Buckshaw is a truly inclusive school where all are valued.

Safeguarding is effective.

Your governors ensure that all policies and procedures are in place, including checks on teachers and governors. Training for staff is comprehensive and up to date. The school utilises support from additional agencies to support vulnerable pupils and also works with the local authority. You demonstrate a determination to ensure that you keep pupils safe and follow up any unknown absences swiftly. Consequently, all safeguarding arrangements are fit for purpose and records are detailed and of a high quality.

Inspection findings

- As part of this inspection, I looked at how effectively adults use questioning to support pupils' learning. Adults use effective questions to check on what pupils know and can do. They use their good subject knowledge to deal with misconceptions as they arise. For example, in a key stage 2 lesson about the Highwayman, the teacher questioned pupils very effectively about what inference meant. Pupils referred to this as 'reading between the lines'. The teacher questioned the pupils further to be sure that they understood how this would relate to their reading. As a result, pupils could answer questions about the text to a high standard.
- A key line of enquiry for this inspection was about leaders' actions to increase the rate of progress in key stage 1. The proportion of pupils who have special educational needs and/or disabilities in key stage 1 in 2016 meant that overall outcomes were lower than those seen nationally. Fewer pupils reached the expected or higher standards than the national averages. In 2017, pupils made better progress and the proportion of pupils reaching expected standards was in line with the provisional national average. However, the proportion of pupils reaching the higher standards remains too low.
- Teachers use their good subject knowledge in key stage 1 to develop pupils' understanding of grammar, punctuation and spelling. Pupils structure their writing well and use their growing knowledge of phonics to help them to spell. However, pupils' limited use of vocabulary and lack of variation in their sentences is hampering progress towards the higher standards.
- Pupils in key stage 1 and key stage 2 make good progress in mathematics. However, adults do not give pupils sufficient opportunities to explain their reasoning in mathematics across school. Leaders recognise this lack of opportunity and work has already begun to improve this. Consequently, while the most able pupils make good progress towards reaching the higher standards, lack of challenge hampers the progress of average-ability pupils. Adults do not consistently teach strategies to help pupils solve mathematical investigations. As a result, too many pupils rely on a trial and error approach. This leads to slower progress in this area.
- I also looked at how effectively leaders and governors use the pupil premium grant to increase the rate of progress for disadvantaged pupils. Leaders and governors carefully analyse the barriers to learning for disadvantaged pupils. Governors monitor the progress of disadvantaged pupils carefully and ensure that

leaders put appropriate support in place for individual pupils. Leaders use the pupil premium effectively to fund a wide range of additional support, dependent on the individual needs of each pupil. This is having a good effect on diminishing the difference between the achievements of disadvantaged pupils in reading and mathematics and those of their peers. Similarly, the achievement difference between these two groups is diminishing in English, but not as quickly as it is in reading and mathematics.

Next steps for the school

Leaders and those responsible for governance should ensure that:

- a greater proportion of middle-attaining and most-able pupils, including disadvantaged pupils, reach the higher standards in mathematics and writing by:
 - giving pupils opportunities to investigate numbers and number patterns
 - ensuring that teachers assess pupils' mathematical understanding consistently in the lesson and deepen understanding
 - ensuring that teachers develop pupils' understanding of grammar, punctuation and spelling so that pupils use this consistently in their writing
 - ensuring that teachers expand pupils' vocabulary choices so that pupils can use these in their writing
- the leaders of history, geography and art are confident in checking what pupils know and can do to improve standards in their subjects
- leaders develop the curriculum to include wider world cultures as well as places.

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

Tanya Hughes
Her Majesty's Inspector

Information about the inspection

During this short inspection, I met with you, members of your leadership team, teachers, and governors. I spoke with a representative of the multi-academy trust. You and I visited classes to observe learning and looked at work in pupils' books. I met with pupils throughout the day and spoke with six parents in the playground before school. I considered the 39 responses and the 30 free-text comments made by parents on the Ofsted online questionnaire, Parent View. I also considered the eight responses to the staff questionnaire and 60 responses to the pupil questionnaire. I heard several pupils read and observed pupils on the playground

and in the dining hall.

I conducted a detailed review of safeguarding, including checking on the school's policies, procedures and record-keeping. I talked with you, other staff, and governors about how you keep children safe. I also considered a range of other documentation, including school improvement planning and information about pupils' progress and attainment.