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Mrs M Buckley
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Dear Mrs Buckley

Short inspection of Yew Tree Community School

Following my visit to the school on 8 November 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 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. You are passionate about providing a broad and enriched curriculum for the pupils. This enables them to experience learning within and beyond the classroom. Other leaders and staff share your ambition. They too have high expectations. Teachers recognise the importance of aspiration and create opportunities for pupils to aim high. One teacher noted: 'Enthusiastic staff with a passion for teaching means that pupils have a passion for learning.' Teachers and teaching assistants appreciate the opportunities you provide to undertake training and to share best practice. They are motivated to improve because of the value that you place on developing leaders of the future.

Pupils told me that they are very proud of their school. They enjoy the many opportunities that teachers provide for them within the curriculum and understand the value of a good education. As such, they have high aspirations and are keen to talk about their ambitions and the type of professions they would like to enter.

In the previous inspection, the inspector reported that the level of challenge for pupils within the classroom required further development. In addition, some pupils had difficulty in managing their behaviour in lessons and during playtime. You have addressed these issues successfully. Leaders provide teachers with training to ensure that they are able to question pupils effectively and think deeply about the subjects that they are studying. You have improved many areas of the curriculum to ensure that pupils have many opportunities to develop their understanding. You are

justly proud of the work completed to improve pupils' behaviour. Your 'zero tolerance' approach to unacceptable behaviour is successful. Pupils' behaviour is well managed during lessons by teachers and teaching assistants. As a result, you have created an environment which is inclusive and where pupils are focused and excited by their learning in a safe environment.

The previous inspector also noted that the effectiveness of governors required further development. Again, your work has been successful. Governors have a clear understanding of their strategic role. They are a visible presence in school, speaking with staff and pupils to ensure that teaching and learning are effective. As a consequence, governors are able to say with certainty and pride that Yew Tree Community School has 'an innovative leadership structure that offers challenge and support'.

We discussed areas where further work is required to support school improvement. You work with other leaders to implement a range of incentives to encourage pupils to attend school regularly. This has had a positive impact for many families. However, you accept that a number of parents still keep their children away from school unnecessarily. This results in attendance levels for some groups of pupils being lower than the national average. In addition, you recognise that, while children make rapid progress from their starting points, they are still not reaching standards seen nationally by the end of Reception. However, other leaders share your delight that these gaps are narrowing significantly. Finally, you are justly proud of the accelerated progress that pupils make in your school. The vast proportion of children arrive in school with skills and knowledge below those typical for their age. By the time they leave school in Year 6 they are very well prepared for the next stage of their education. Your school's own evaluation has highlighted, however, that not enough pupils are achieving the higher standards in reading, writing and mathematics at key stage 1 and key stage 2. You are working effectively with leaders and teachers to address this issue.

Safeguarding is effective.

The leadership team ensure that all safeguarding arrangements are of a high standard. All required checks take place to ensure that the adults in school do not pose any threat to pupils.

The school site is safe and secure and the identity of visitors is closely checked. You keep detailed records related to the safety of pupils. Governors and staff have completed a broad range of safeguarding training. This ensures that they have a clear understanding of their role in keeping pupils safe. You have completed audits of safeguarding arrangements but agree that this activity could be undertaken on a more regular basis.

Almost all parents who responded to the Ofsted survey agree that the school is a safe and happy place where pupils thrive. A typical response made by one parent was, 'I wholeheartedly support this school and believe that it fosters a great environment for growth.'

Inspection findings

- My first line of enquiry considered what leaders are doing to improve pupils' attendance. You send regular newsletters to parents, reminding them about the importance of punctuality and attendance. You provide pupils with a broad range of incentives to attend school regularly. They especially love the certificates, rewards and prizes that you provide for them. Pupils told me that they don't want to be absent from school because they enjoy receiving these rewards. You have successfully identified, and are addressing, the changing barriers to regular attendance. You know that, in increasing your pupil numbers to take pupils who live further away from school, the challenges that parents face in getting them to school have increased. You are also aware that you must work more extensively with parents so they gain a greater appreciation of regular attendance. Although the attendance of many pupils has improved, there is still more to do.
- My next line of enquiry examined how successful leaders have been in increasing the number of children who achieve a good level of development by the end of the Reception class. You have greatly enhanced your Nursery provision with new buildings and exciting areas in which children learn. You provide training for staff and high-quality resources to enrich learning. You also explore ways in which leaders and teachers support parents in preparing their children effectively for school. Your efforts show a very good level of success. Results for children by the time they leave the Reception class have increased year on year. Children make rapid progress from their initial starting points. However, you acknowledge that the number of children achieving a good level of development is still below the national average. Leaders agree that further work is needed to build further upon the success achieved so far.
- We discussed the strategies that leaders have put into place to address the lower-than-average phonics scores in key stage 1. You and your teachers have worked tirelessly to bring about improvement in this area. Leaders' monitoring of lessons identified that changes should be made to teaching to ensure that all pupils are challenged appropriately. This has been addressed and you have created an environment where pupils are keen to achieve. One pupil said, 'It gets harder, but we can do it.' As a result of your concerted efforts, performance in phonics has increased rapidly over the last four years.
- My final line of enquiry looked at what leaders and teachers are doing to challenge pupils to reach the higher standards in reading, writing and mathematics. You and your leaders are aware that the number of pupils achieving the higher standards at the end of key stage 1 and key stage 2 is lower than the national average. You are dealing with this issue in a very positive and effective manner. You ensure that staff undertake a broad range of training to allow them to further challenge the most able pupils. Teachers ask searching questions in lessons and provide a broad range of opportunities to deepen and consolidate knowledge. From my review of your pupils' books, observing teaching and learning and discussing the school's own data with you, it is evident that staff are consistently challenging the most able pupils. Nevertheless, further work is required to ensure that a greater proportion of pupils reach the higher standards in reading, writing and mathematics by the end of each key stage.

Next steps for the school

Leaders and those responsible for governance should ensure that:

- partnerships with parents are strengthened to ensure that no groups of pupils are disadvantaged by low attendance
- improvements in the early years are built upon so that a greater proportion of children achieve a good level of development
- current good practice is further developed to ensure that a greater number of pupils achieve the higher standards in reading, writing and mathematics by the end of key stage 1 and key stage 2.

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

Yours sincerely

Gill Pritchard
Her Majesty's Inspector

Information about the inspection

During the inspection, meetings were held with you, your two heads of school and a group of middle leaders. I also met with four members of the governing body, including the chair of governors, and your school business manager. I had informal discussions with a group of pupils to seek their views on the school. Finally, I met with a group of teachers and teaching assistants.

I visited classes in the school ranging from Nursery to Year 6 and was accompanied by you during this tour. Examples of pupils' work were scrutinised and I observed pupils' behaviour during lessons and as they moved around school. A number of documents were reviewed, including your record of checks on the suitability of staff to work with children, the school's self-evaluation form, the school improvement plan, assessment information, minutes of governing body meetings, behaviour logs and attendance records. I also took account of the 15 responses to Parent View, Ofsted's online questionnaire, the 26 responses to Ofsted's staff questionnaire and the 25 responses to Ofsted's pupil questionnaire. I considered information posted on the school's website.