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28 December 2017

Mrs Tracy Hallows  
Headteacher  
Wheatley Lane Methodist Voluntary Aided Primary School  
Fence  
Burnley  
Lancashire  
BB12 9ED

Dear Mrs Hallows

### **Short inspection of Wheatley Lane Methodist Voluntary Aided Primary School**

Following my visit to the school on 12 December 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 March 2013.

You joined the school as headteacher in January 2015. The deputy headteacher was new to the school in September 2015.

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

The leadership team has maintained the good quality of education in the school since the last inspection. Leaders have made sure that they have addressed the recommendations made at the previous inspection. Leaders, governors and staff work together successfully to move the school forward. Pupils continue to achieve well.

You make sure that the Christian faith remains central to the work of the school. Pupils learn much about values such as forgiveness and peace. They understand the beliefs and practices of Christianity. They understand and respect the views of people of other faiths and religions.

Before you joined Wheatley Lane, the success of the school had dipped following the previous inspection. The quality of teaching and learning declined. Leaders did not make sure that all staff kept up with many large-scale national changes to the subjects that pupils study. Staff were not fully ready for new arrangements to assess pupils' learning. Since your appointment, you have steadily improved the quality of leadership, teaching, learning and assessment. You are unafraid to challenge staff where required. Under your leadership, the education of pupils at the school is once again blossoming.

Leaders make sure that the school curriculum is interesting and worthwhile for pupils. The creative development of pupils is a strength. For example, pupils learn to play a

wide range of musical instruments skilfully. In Year 1 and Year 2, pupils' learning is enhanced greatly by fascinating opportunities to learn through dramatic role play in each class.

You make sure that Wheatley Lane is a school that is proud of its history and village links. Equally, this is a school where staff have positive links with other schools and organisations. Staff share their own successes with their peers and learn from the work of other teachers across east Lancashire. The quality of teaching is good and improving. Staff support the changes you are making.

Senior leaders check on and review the work of the school, including the safeguarding of pupils, carefully. Leaders know each child well. They and governors know the strengths of the school. They understand where staff and leaders need to focus their attention even more to improve their work. Leaders provide school governors with a clear and well-informed overview of the school. They engage openly with education experts from outside the school to help them review it accurately and support the work of staff.

The previous inspection recommended that teachers set work for pupils that is at the right level of difficulty. Inspection evidence and that of school leaders and the local authority show that teaching is increasingly challenging pupils. Pupils' progress and their attainment across subjects are good. You and I observed some successful levels of challenge for pupils in key stages 1 and 2. In the Reception class, we observed staff helpfully challenging children, particularly in their learning outdoors. However, adults did not expect enough of children in some of their artwork indoors.

Another recommendation at the previous inspection was that senior leaders make sure that subject leaders play a bigger role in the improvement of the school. You have achieved this by giving them much training and support, as well as opportunities to contribute. In particular, the work of the school in science, mathematics and English is led well.

Staff and leaders give much emphasis in lessons, assemblies and extra activities to many aspects of pupils' spiritual, moral and social development. Pupils learn how to identify and challenge racism. They learn how to avoid using homophobic language. However, although their learning positively helps them in their lives in modern Britain, they do not understand enough about the cultures of other people and communities. Also, pupils do not know about the positive contribution made to society by people who have disabilities.

### **Safeguarding is effective.**

Leaders and staff give full attention to the care and protection of pupils. Leaders make sure that all safeguarding arrangements meet requirements and are adapted precisely to the needs of the school. Pupils benefit from worthwhile opportunities to learn about their own personal safety, for example about the risks posed by unfamiliar people online or in their local community. Parents say that the headteacher and staff are visible and available for discussion at the start and end of each school day. All parents responding to the Ofsted survey say that their children are safe at school. Pupils with whom I spoke

said that they feel safe at school. They say that bullying among pupils is rare and is addressed well by staff.

Leaders give staff helpful updates about national and local child protection issues that may affect pupils and families at Wheatley Lane. They make good use of the expertise of other agencies, for example the police, when training staff and governors about safeguarding. Governors check and review the safeguarding work of the school prudently, including the filtering of online access for pupils. Staff are vigilant about recording any concerns that arise about pupils' welfare. Leaders keep a close eye on information about pupils and link promptly with other agencies as required.

## **Inspection findings**

- Leaders make sure that staff have access to training that improves their work. Staff now plan much more thoroughly how they will challenge pupils in their work. For example, in a key stage 1 mathematics activity, the most able pupils added and subtracted quantities of money using mental mathematics strategies. They told me that it was difficult and it was fun. They learned successfully because the lesson helped them to solve complex problems skilfully. In a key stage 2 English lesson, staff explained clearly to pupils the challenges they should attempt when using conjunctions in a writing activity. This meant that pupils knew how to aim high to help them to learn as much as possible. Teachers' strengthened emphasis on planning challenges for pupils in different activities means that learning is becoming more worthwhile. Pupils make good progress in mathematics, writing and reading. The proportion of pupils achieving at greater depth in different subjects is beginning to rise.
- In Reception, staff use the outdoor area thoughtfully to support children's learning and to challenge them. For example, in the snow and ice, staff seized opportunities to help children to think about making igloos. Children were deeply involved in solving problems to construct their own igloo. They could explain to adults the role and purpose of the structure. Staff supported children's thinking with good questioning and a wide range of language. Leaders and staff also make sure that Reception children learn outdoors through a variety of other interesting activities, including opportunities to write and to climb.
- Given the potential abilities of children at the school, not enough was expected of some of their art skills in Reception during the inspection. For example, some children were colouring in photocopied pictures that did not challenge their learning.
- Middle leaders now play a much more important and successful part in the work of the school. For example, the leadership of mathematics, English and science increasingly helps teaching and pupils' achievement to continue to improve. The headteacher makes sure that middle leaders have the time, skills and opportunities they need to review the work of staff. Middle leaders are now confident and able in their roles. They share their reviews of the school with staff, senior leaders and governors and help plan the next steps for improvement. They know that they make a positive difference to the work of their colleagues.
- Pupils learn to understand democracy, in part because they see it in action in the work of their school. They learn that their views are important. They understand the

important contribution made by Black people to civil rights. For example, pupils learn about Martin Luther King and Rosa Parks in the United States and Nelson Mandela in South Africa. They know about important topical issues, such as the recent issuing of a decree by Saudi Arabia's King Salman allowing women to drive for the first time. Even so, pupils do not know enough about the culture of other people and communities. Through activities such as anti-bullying week, pupils learn to respect differences between themselves and others. However, they do not know about the many successful contributions made by people who have disabilities to modern British life.

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

Leaders and those responsible for governance should ensure that:

- staff teach pupils to be even more prepared for their lives in modern Britain
- all activities for children in the Reception class are meaningful and challenging.

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

Tim Vaughan  
**Her Majesty's Inspector**

### **Information about the inspection**

During the inspection, you and I observed teaching in a sample of classrooms, spoke with pupils and looked at pupils' work. I met with a random sample of eight pupils from key stage 2. I spoke with several parents as they brought their children to school. I considered information from a school survey of parents conducted in March 2017. I reviewed 65 responses to the Ofsted online questionnaire, Parent View. I met with you to discuss your reviews of the school's performance and your plans for improvement. I met with four members of the governing body, including the chair. I took account of responses from nine members of staff to an Ofsted questionnaire. I met with a school adviser from the local authority. I checked school information about the care and protection of pupils and staff.