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Mrs Lorraine Bamforth
Headteacher
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Dear Mrs Bamforth

Short inspection of Ripponden Junior and Infant School

Following my visit to the school on 11 January 2018, 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 July 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 were appointed as headteacher in January 2015, having previously been the deputy headteacher. It was particularly important to you to bring stability to the school's leadership team following the turbulence in leadership before your appointment. One of the areas for improvement at the last inspection linked to this was to improve communication with parents and carers. This is something you have addressed successfully. Parents are thrilled with the stability in leadership now and are particularly positive about the caring ethos you have established. They can see the impact this has on pupils' personal development and well-being, which is also supporting their academic achievement. Parents appreciate the workshops, such as those for mathematics and phonics, which are helping them to understand how to support their child's learning at home.

A caring culture and high expectations of pupils' behaviour are evident throughout the school. This begins with a calm start to the day as pupils walk into school sensibly, independently putting things in their lockers and then entering the classrooms. Pupils move around the school in a very positive manner. They are polite and courteous, holding doors open and walking in lines, even when not under direct supervision. The 'branch out' reward system motivates them to demonstrate attributes such as resilience and perseverance. Pupils talk with confidence about how this supports them with their learning tasks. They say that they are very happy at school and that the best thing about school is the teachers because they are so supportive and caring.

The school also benefits from having a strong team of governors. The governors are very aware of the school's strengths and weaknesses. They are ambitious for the school and wholeheartedly support your vision. They carry out their roles effectively, making sure that they have the necessary skills to support the school's development. Their specific roles help them to check the impact of the school's improvement work. Similarly, they are able to challenge and support the school well as a result of the wealth of information gained on their regular visits to school.

You are ambitious for pupils and are keen to support staff to develop so that they are able to have an increasing impact on improving the quality of teaching and learning. This approach is creating greater capacity for further improvement, and staff share your commitment and determination to make sure that all pupils succeed. You have ensured that pupils' outcomes have continued to be strong and are insistent that they improve even further. Pupils consistently achieve at least in line with, and often above, national averages in reading, writing and mathematics by the end of key stages 1 and 2. However, you accept that sometimes leaders' thorough knowledge and tracking of individual pupils would benefit from stepping back and checking to see what outcomes look like for groups of pupils and cohorts. This would help you to spot any patterns emerging that may otherwise go unnoticed. You are aware, though, of the most pressing priorities for pupils' achievement. For example, the proportion of children reaching a good level of development by the end of the early years has remained just below the national average and is the school's most urgent priority.

Safeguarding is effective.

You have created a vigilant culture of safeguarding throughout the school. You have ensured that all safeguarding arrangements are fit for purpose and records are detailed and of high quality. Governors carry out their duties effectively and ensure that safeguarding is a high priority by including it as a standing agenda item at meetings. It is also an agenda item at every meeting with school staff. This supports everyone in school to understand their responsibilities and know how to recognise and respond to any signs of concern.

Pupils behave very well and say that there is rarely any bullying. They feel safe and well cared for in school, and parents strongly agree. Pupils demonstrate and talk about their understanding of values such as tolerance and respect. This helps them to work harmoniously together. Leaders are diligent in ensuring that pupils know how to keep themselves and others safe. Pupils in key stage 2 know about the risks that come from using social media and the dangers associated with online bullying.

Inspection findings

- Leaders have taken a range of actions to address the relatively weaker achievement of children over time at the end of the early years. This began with identifying a new location for Reception. This has enabled children to have immediate access to high-quality outdoor facilities which offer great potential for leaders to develop even further. A specialist leader of education is supporting the

school to make the best use of the provision for children's learning and development both inside and out. This was one of the areas for improvement identified at the last inspection and is now well on its way to completion.

However, some aspects of school improvement planning and use of assessment information for the early years lack sharpness. You accept that there needs to be greater rigour in the form of precise, measurable outcomes to bring about the required improvements at a faster pace. Also, a lack of emphasis on children's next steps for learning is holding up some children's development. For example, there are missed opportunities for children to use and apply the phonics skills they have been taught at other times throughout the day and so consolidate their learning.

- Performance in writing by the end of key stage 1 in 2017, while in line with the national average, was not as strong for boys as in reading or mathematics. Although leaders have been making improvements to the quality of teaching and learning of writing, they have not rigorously checked the difference it is making for groups or cohorts of pupils. However, analysis of the assessment information and looking at work in pupils' books confirm that, on the whole, progress for current pupils in Years 1 and 2, including boys, is good and improving. This is a result of leaders' close checks on each individual. Leaders have also identified spelling and handwriting as remaining barriers to achievement, and a new approach to spelling has been introduced recently as a result. It is already clear to see that there is greater consistency of approach throughout the school.
- When listening to pupils read, it became apparent that those who are in the early stages of learning to read using phonics do not always have access to books which match the phonics skills they are currently learning. This is minimising the success they are able to experience and the subsequent confidence and progress they are able to make. Although pupils' performance in the Year 1 phonics screening check has been consistently above the national average over time, you are keen to quickly address this matter so that it does not limit the pace at which pupils learn to read. This is particularly important in supporting as many lower-attaining pupils as possible to quickly catch up with their peers.
- At the last inspection, leaders were asked to make sure that tasks are set at the right level of difficulty to challenge pupils. You have accurately identified the need to increase the proportion of pupils who exceed the expected standards by the end of key stage 2 as an area of the school's improvement work. Leaders' continued actions to improve the quality of teaching and learning are paying off. The proportion of pupils exceeding the expected standard by the end of key stage 2 in 2017 increased in reading, writing and mathematics to above the national average. A new approach to the teaching of mathematics is also supporting pupils to reach the higher standard. Pupils' books and lessons show that pupils are challenged effectively. Pupils say that they enjoy having to think about tasks and puzzle over tricky work. In English, a wider range of challenging texts are helping teachers to have high expectations for pupils and to expose them to vocabulary they may not otherwise encounter. This is effectively supporting pupils' reading and writing development.
- Attendance was above average overall in 2015/16 at 97.2% and has remained

consistently high in 2016/17. Although attendance for disadvantaged pupils was below the national average figure and in the bottom 10% in 2015/16 at 94.7%, last year it was 95.6%. This considerable improvement is as a result of rigorous action taken by leaders. Likewise, persistent absence was below the national average at 4.2% in 2015/16 and has remained consistently low in 2016/17.

Next steps for the school

Leaders and those responsible for governance should ensure that:

- information about pupils' attainment and progress is analysed more effectively so that leaders can identify successes and areas for improvement for groups and cohorts of pupils
- in the early stages of reading, books are matched to pupils' phonics skills
- in the early years, improvement planning and planning for children's next learning steps are rigorous enough to bring about the improvements needed
- an increasing proportion of children, at least in line with the national average, reach 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 Calderdale. This letter will be published on the Ofsted website.

Yours sincerely

Kirsty Godfrey
Her Majesty's Inspector

Information about the inspection

During the inspection, I held meetings with you and a senior leader. I also met with four members of the governing body, including the chair, and I had a telephone conversation with a representative of the local authority. I evaluated documentation, including the school's self-evaluation, the school development plan, information about pupils' progress, minutes of governing body meetings, attendance records and information about safeguarding. We visited classrooms together to observe teaching and learning. Together with you and a senior leader, we scrutinised the work of a small group of pupils. I listened to three pupils read. I spoke with several parents and carers at the start of the school day and considered the 72 responses to Ofsted's online questionnaire, Parent View. I met with a group of pupils from a range of year groups and spoke with a group of teachers. I also took into consideration the 16 responses to the staff survey and the 110 responses to the pupil survey.