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Mrs Clare Salmon
Headteacher
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Dear Mrs Salmon

Short inspection of Butterstile Primary School

Following my visit to the school on 16 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 November 2013.

This school continues to be good.

The leadership team has maintained the good quality of education in the school since the last inspection.

Butterstile is a caring, welcoming school in which pupils thrive. It is inclusive. For example, when I entered classrooms, I was instantly struck by how well pupils worked together busily and happily, regardless of any gender or ethnicity differences. Many parents and carers, in response to Parent View, stated that they liked the school's caring ethos. You, and leaders at all levels, have taken effective action to shape and nurture this caring ethos. Over the last three years, you have also successfully raised pupils' aspirations and their achievement.

An area for improvement after the last inspection was to increase pupils' attainment in writing. The school's assessment information shows that pupils' attainment has risen, their progress has accelerated and pupils' work shows that they make good progress. By the end of Year 6, they write increasingly complex pieces of work, correctly spelt and punctuated, at the expected standard for their age. Since the previous inspection, pupils' ability to read using phonics by the end of Reception and Year 1 has improved. This is now in line with the national average. The next step for the school is to improve pupils' ability to read for meaning and to make sure that pupils make faster progress between Reception and Year 2. In reading comprehension, teachers should accelerate pupils' progress by asking pupils to elaborate their answers more thoroughly about the texts that they have read.

The second area for improvement was to make sure that leaders' improvement

plans have a positive impact on the quality of teaching. The school's plan to improve is well crafted, has clear measures of success and has, over the last three years, improved teaching in mathematics and in writing. Since the previous inspection, the school has joined a cluster of schools to share ideas and to become more accurate in their assessments. The school has become more open to external advice and guidance through working more frequently and closely with other schools in Bury. The next step is to broaden the curriculum so that it develops pupils' historical skills and widens their knowledge of important women in history.

Safeguarding is effective.

The school's safeguarding systems and procedures are fit for purpose. Safeguarding is a high priority. Staff are tenacious and persistent in making sure that pupils are safe. They alert the police or senior social care managers if they feel that they are not getting a swift, or good enough, response from other professionals. Staff are alert. For example, they quickly identify if a pupil is at a potential risk of female genital mutilation or child sexual exploitation. You have made sure that the staff are well trained and that there is a good system throughout the year of updating them about the latest guidance or best practice. In addition, safeguarding is a standard item at senior and middle leadership meetings to make sure that staff are alert to any concerns. For example, the staff have been successfully trained by a national organisation to make sure that they know how to prevent homophobic bullying and how to keep people of different sexualities and genders safe. The school's documentation, including the single central record, is thorough and detailed.

Inspection findings

- My first line of enquiry was to establish the quality of teaching and, consequently, pupils' achievement in reading and writing. Pupils read frequently. They told me that they read daily in class and they also read at home. Some boys I spoke with had challenging books and many had a mini library at home. They read clearly and accurately and they used different skills to break down unfamiliar or difficult words. By the end of Reception and Year 1, pupils' ability to read using phonics is similar to the national average. By the end of Year 2, however, their progress has slowed. In 2017, only two thirds of pupils were at the expected reading standard. This, in part, is because there is a greater focus in Year 2 on reading for meaning and pupils have not been able to accurately answer questions about what they have read. In pupils' work across the school, they complete reading comprehension exercises and are asked questions orally about what they have read. Some of the lack of detail in pupils' answers is because some teachers use worksheets that limit the amount that pupils can write to only a word or a phrase. The answers pupils provide are sometimes not sophisticated or detailed. You have already identified this issue and have appointed a teacher to lead on reading. You have also established extra reading comprehension sessions, particularly in Year 1. Across the school, the attainment of disadvantaged pupils is rising, as is the attainment of boys.
- In the past, pupils' progress in writing has been slow, particularly for boys and for disadvantaged pupils. Pupils' work now shows that they make good progress.

Over the year, their knowledge and use of punctuation and grammar improve and become increasingly accurate. Pupils could tell me, for example, how and where to use features such as semi-colons, fronted adverbials and brackets. They write for different purposes with creativity, fluency and accuracy. Boys' and disadvantaged pupils' attainment is rising and their progress is also accelerating. Some of this is because you have made good use of the pupil premium grant to clearly identify pupils' barriers to learning. You have put into place well-crafted plans to help pupils to catch up with their peers and with other pupils nationally.

- My second line of enquiry was to find out whether the curriculum was broad and balanced and whether it has a positive impact on pupils' achievement. In mathematics, the curriculum is very well planned and organised. Pupils develop fluency and have good opportunities to develop their problem-solving skills and to reason mathematically about their calculations. They make good progress. In some year groups, teachers make good links between mathematics and other subjects. In Year 5's work on Brazil, for example, pupils considered a range of graphs and charts, including average rainfall, temperature and climate graphs.
- History is not well planned. In the curriculum, there is not enough focus on historical skills such as the understanding of chronology (the order in which events happened or civilisations lived) or historical perspective (looking at sources or events from different viewpoints). This means that pupils have a disjointed view of historical events. Across the curriculum, there are a few chances in homework topics to study important women. However, there are very few opportunities to study female artists, musicians or women in history. This means that pupils develop a skewed male-only view of the world.
- The third line of enquiry was to find out why the rate of exclusions is higher than the national average and why the rate of persistent absence increased last year. There is a comprehensive and well-documented case for each exclusion which demonstrates the school's actions to improve pupils' behaviour and the strategies they have used to prevent exclusions. I am satisfied that exclusions only happen as a last resort, with a key focus on keeping other pupils and staff safe in the school. The main reason that absences increased last year is because parents took pupils out of school on holiday, partially because the local authority stopped issuing fixed penalty notices. Fines have now been reintroduced. The number of pupils persistently absent has reduced and attendance is higher than it was at the same time last year.

Next steps for the school

Leaders and those responsible for governance should ensure that:

- pupils improve their reading for meaning and elaborate their answers to reading comprehension questions in greater depth
- the curriculum is broadened to take greater account of women, such as artists, musicians, engineers and important women in history. Leaders should also ensure that pupils develop better understanding of historical skills, such as being able to correctly sequence events and civilisations.

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

Yours sincerely

Allan Torr
Ofsted Inspector

Information about the inspection

I observed teaching and learning in six classes, four of which were joint observations with the deputy headteachers. I listened to some pupils read and talked to them about their reading books. Eighteen pupils responded to an online survey, the views of which I considered along with the views of pupils in and around school. I also looked through some pupils' work. I met with senior leaders, teachers who lead subjects and two representatives of the governing body. Forty-five parents replied to Ofsted's online survey, Parent View. I took their views into account, in addition to parents' views given to the school in its latest survey. I also took into account the views of 35 members of staff who responded to the Ofsted survey.