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9 January 2018

Mr Marcus Cockcroft
Headteacher
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Dear Mr Cockcroft

Short inspection of Heap Bridge Village Primary School

Following my visit to the school on 9 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 September 2013.

There is no change to the school's current overall effectiveness grade of good as a result of this inspection.

This school continues to be good. The leadership team has maintained the quality of education in the school since the last inspection. Your focus and commitment to ensuring pupils receive a high standard of education are shared by staff and governors. Your drive and enthusiasm permeate the school. You are reflective in the decisions you make, and committed to providing opportunities and experiences that will enrich pupils' learning and broaden their opportunities.

Leaders have effectively tackled the areas identified for improvement identified at the last inspection. You have successfully implemented changes to the way you teach phonics. Consequently, the proportion of pupils reaching the phonics score at the end of Year 1 has remained above national for the last three years. The proportion of pupils reaching the expected standards in reading and writing by the end of key stage 1 has also improved. You have correctly identified that you need to further embed these improvements. A higher proportion of disadvantaged pupils should be working at the national standard.

The quality of teaching has improved since the last inspection. Learning activities closely match pupils' needs and interests and provide appropriate challenges. Older pupils spoken to during the inspection said that teachers make learning interactive and interesting. Pupils take pride in the presentation of their work and know what the next steps in their learning will be. As a result, pupils' outcomes are typically above those seen nationally by the end of key stage 2. There is an increasing

proportion of pupils working at greater depth, particularly in grammar, punctuation, spelling and reading, by the end of key stage 2.

You have established a strong culture of professional dialogue, support and challenge among your staff. They appreciate the opportunities to share skills and knowledge with each other and with colleagues within the local alliance of schools. This is particularly helpful for those who are new to teaching.

The vast majority of parents spoken to during the inspection, and those who accessed Parent View online, commented extremely positively about the school. Parents appreciate the support you and your staff provide. The learning mentor works closely with other agencies and professionals, to ensure that families and pupils receive the support they need. A parent spoken to said, 'It's a small school and staff know the children very well'.

Pupils are very polite, confident, and proud of their achievements both academically and in sporting competitions. Positive relationships within school contribute to pupils' positive behaviour, attitude towards learning, and the progress that they make. Pupils feel valued and cared for. One of the pupils said, 'We treat people with kindness and respect.' They are confident that there is always someone they can talk to if they have any problems.

Safeguarding is effective.

The leadership of the school has ensured that all safeguarding arrangements, including online filtering arrangements, are fit for purpose. Staff and governors receive regular training and know what to do if they have any concerns. There is an effective and efficient system in place to ensure that the most vulnerable pupils are identified quickly. Pupils have a very clear understanding of how to keep themselves safe, particularly online. Pupils spoken to said, 'If you have any worries then you can contact the headteacher through the link on our school website and it is sorted out very quickly.' They say that bullying is rare and behaviour is good. Parents and pupils feel that the school is a safe place to be.

Inspection findings

- During the inspection, I focused on a number of key lines of enquiry, the first of which related to attendance. Although attendance overall remains above national, you have been relentless in your drive to improve the attendance of a number of pupils who are persistently absent. For a small proportion of pupils, health-related issues have led to considerable absence from school.
- Staff robustly follow up when pupils are absent. You work closely with other agencies and when absences are due to holidays, the appropriate action is taken. You have introduced a number of imaginative incentives, including rewards, certificates and prizes that are having a positive impact on attendance. This is having a direct impact on the progress that pupils make.
- For the second focus of the inspection we discussed how effectively the additional funding for disadvantaged pupils is used to diminish the difference in

rates of progress and attainment, particularly in key stage 1. You have accurately identified the barriers to learning for disadvantaged pupils. This group incorporates a high proportion of pupils who also have special educational needs (SEN) and/or disabilities. You and your staff work closely with pupils and their families to provide the individualised support they need.

- Teachers use a range of assessment strategies to identify very precisely what the next steps in pupils' learning will be. Leaders ensure that staff have the knowledge and skills they need to support individual pupils and the progress that they make. The school's own assessment information shows that rates of progress are improving, particularly in reading and writing. However, you acknowledge that you need to continue to accelerate the progress of disadvantaged pupils, so that a higher proportion are working at the national standard by the end of key stage 1.
- Outcomes at the end of key stage 2 are above national. A high proportion of pupils are working at greater depth, particularly the most able pupils. The changes you have made to the teaching of phonics, grammar, punctuation, spelling and reading across the school have had a direct impact on improving outcomes at the end of key stage 2. Pupils' work shows that an increased proportion of pupils are also beginning to work at a greater depth in writing.
- Teachers accurately identify the 'next steps' in pupils' learning and pupils know what they need to do to improve. For example, a pupil spoken to during the inspection said, 'I practise spelling mistakes so that I spell the word right next time, and it works.' Activities effectively meet the needs and interests of pupils, and as a result progress is being made.
- In mathematics, teachers quickly identify where there are gaps in pupils' knowledge, skills and understanding. Teachers give pupils support to ensure that the differences close quickly, and pupils are successfully helped to improve their rates of progress. However, this is not the case for some pupils, particularly middle attaining pupils, and the progress that they are making is not rapid enough to ensure that a higher proportion are working at a greater depth by the end of key stage 2. Leaders have correctly identified that this is an area for further improvement.
- Finally, we looked at the successful actions that leaders have taken to improve outcomes for pupils at the end of Reception, so that an increasing proportion are ready for Year 1. Leaders have worked hard to develop links with the large number of nursery settings the children attend before they start school. Parents commented that their children settle quickly into the routines of school as a result of the well thought through activities and events they attend in the summer term. The majority of children start school with the knowledge and skills below that typical for their age. You work closely with other colleagues in the local group of schools to ensure your assessments are accurate. Leaders swiftly identify what the 'next steps' in children's learning need to be in order to accelerate their rates of progress throughout the year. Children thrive in the exciting and purposeful learning environment you have created. Improvements in the outdoor area have greatly enhanced the learning experiences and opportunities for the children.

- Leaders have ensured that staff have the skills, knowledge and understanding they need to support children's learning and help them to make the accelerated progress needed to ensure they are ready for Year 1. 'Working together, learning together' sessions throughout the year provide parents with an understanding of what their children are learning. Workshops for parents about how you teach reading, writing and mathematics ensure parents have the skills they need to support their children's learning at home. As a result, the vast majority of parents contribute regularly to the evidence you collect. Parents speak highly of how well your staff know their children.

Next steps for the school

Leaders and those responsible for governance should ensure that:

- they continue to embed the improvements made in key stage 1, so that a higher proportion of disadvantaged pupils are working at the national standard
- they continue to accelerate progress rates, particularly in mathematics, so that a higher proportion of pupils are working at a greater depth in 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 Rochdale. This letter will be published on the Ofsted website.

Yours sincerely

Amanda Stringer
Her Majesty's Inspector

Information about the inspection

During this inspection, I met with you, other members of your leadership team and staff. I also met with the chair of governors and three members of the governing body. I also met with a representative from the local authority. You and I visited classes where I had the opportunity to speak to pupils and see their work. I heard a number of pupils read. I met with a group of pupils during the day and spoke with a number of parents at the start of the school day in the playground. I also took account of the free-text comments and 29 responses to Parent View, the Ofsted online questionnaire for parents. I scrutinised your assessment information, your self-evaluation, school improvement planning, the single central record and other safeguarding procedures and practices.