

Ofsted  
Piccadilly Gate  
Store Street  
Manchester  
M1 2WD

T 0300 123 4234  
[www.gov.uk/ofsted](http://www.gov.uk/ofsted)



26 February 2018

Mrs Jenny Hetherington  
Headteacher  
Shadsworth Junior School  
Arran Avenue  
Blackburn  
Lancashire  
BB1 2ET

Dear Mrs Hetherington

### **Short inspection of Shadsworth Junior School**

Following my visit to the school on 6 February 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 May 2014.

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

The leadership team has maintained the good quality of education in the school since the last inspection. Based on the evidence gathered during this short inspection, I am of the opinion that the school has demonstrated strong practice and marked improvement in certain areas. This may indicate that the school is improving towards being outstanding. Therefore, I am recommending that the school's next inspection be a section 5 inspection.

The school's motto 'Learning today for a better tomorrow' drives its work. You lead the school with unwavering commitment and determination to improve pupils' life chances. Your sense of purpose is mirrored by the dedication and enthusiasm of other senior leaders, staff and governors. The high expectations you set for pupils' achievement and the equally high level of attention given to their welfare and safety are tangible features of the school's ethos.

When pupils start in Year 3, the picture of their attainment in reading, writing and mathematics is typically low. You expect teachers to place a strong emphasis on the development of these basic skills to ensure that pupils are well prepared for secondary school when they leave. Teachers do this well. Pupils make rapid progress. By the end of Year 6, standards in reading, writing and mathematics are at least in line with those of pupils nationally. This achievement is all the more impressive given the higher standards that pupils are now expected to attain and the substantial barriers to learning that many pupils face. Pupils' achievement in reading is particularly noteworthy. In this subject, pupils' progress over time has been in the top 20% of schools nationally. Moreover, many disadvantaged pupils

make significantly better progress in reading than other, non-disadvantaged pupils nationally with the same prior attainment. You ensure that pupils who need extra help with their learning or support to deal with social and emotional issues receive it. The school's two nurture rooms provide particularly well for vulnerable pupils, including some who have very challenging behaviour. You have forged strong links with the feeder infant school. To support pupils' transition to high school, you have instigated a number of initiatives. These include giving high school staff a greater insight to learning in Year 6 and sharing your expertise on nurture provision for pupils who will need this.

Your focus on developing pupils' skills in reading, writing and mathematics does not result in a narrow curriculum. Your passion to broaden pupils' experiences and raise their aspirations is shared by your leadership team and staff. You explained that pupils undertake topics that are designed to have an inspiring 'hook' to ignite their curiosity. Teachers then plan work that gets pupils emotionally involved in their learning so that they are keen to find out more. Purposeful opportunities for pupils to use and practise their literacy and numeracy skills are built into lessons in all subjects. The questions pupils composed to interview the local member of parliament about care for child refugees deported without their parents is an excellent example of this.

Leaders and governors have addressed the recommendations made by the last inspection. At that time, inspectors asked leaders to provide more opportunities for pupils to write and to improve their grammar, punctuation and spelling. Teachers now ensure that pupils have many more opportunities to use and extend their writing across the curriculum. Year 6 pupils' results in the grammar, punctuation and spelling test have risen significantly. The proportions of pupils attaining the standard expected in this test have been above average for the last two years. Inspectors also asked leaders to ensure more challenge for the most able pupils in mathematics. You and other leaders regularly check that teachers are challenging the most able pupils in mathematics and other subjects. In addition, the most able pupils routinely benefit from extra, small-group teaching to improve their achievement.

You have identified the need to embed British values in the curriculum. The work that your deputy headteacher is leading to gain the Unicef Rights Respecting Schools award is supporting this priority. Further work is needed, however, to ensure that the curriculum enables pupils to extend their appreciation of diversity and equalities and gain a more explicit understanding of fundamental British values. We agreed that it would be useful for subject leaders to add this focus to their reviews.

Governors are experienced and hold leaders to account. They ask leaders questions about pupils' achievement and behaviour, including the impact of leaders' work on reducing persistent absence, which has been above average for some time.

Pupils think that behaviour is good most of the time, but recognise that some pupils have difficulty managing their behaviour. Most think that teachers and other staff

are good at dealing with any issues that occur. This includes bullying, which pupils said is rare. The views of pupils, parents and carers and staff provide a very clear indication of these stakeholders' satisfaction with the school's work. Pupils are proud of their school. They understand the need for a good education and their right to this. All of the pupils who completed the online survey said that they enjoy their learning and would recommend the school to others. One pupil's comment, 'It's the best school ever', summed up the views of many. Parents are very appreciative of what you and staff do for their children and for them, as parents. 'Staff here go the extra distance' was a comment from one parent. All of the staff who completed the online survey believe that the school is well led and managed and that they are treated fairly and with respect. Staff, too, are proud to work here. One staff member poignantly captured the power of the school's spirit and character in the comment, 'This school just gets you in the heart.'

### **Safeguarding is effective.**

The leadership team has ensured that all safeguarding procedures are fit for purpose. Records are detailed and of high quality. Regular safeguarding training for staff ensures that they are well aware of their responsibilities and vigilant in carrying these out. A significant part of the school's safeguarding work is the extensive support for pupils' families. This early intervention has reduced the number of referrals to outside agencies. Where concerns are escalated, leaders monitor things closely to ensure that pupils receive the help they need.

### **Inspection findings**

- A line of enquiry for the inspection was the school's work to develop pupils' learning across a broad range of subjects. You send a strong aspirational message to pupils that they can excel in many areas, such as sport, music and art. To support this, you ensure that pupils receive a broad curriculum, which is enriched by interesting visits, visitors and extra-curricular activities. Pupils said that they have a good variety in their learning and named many different subjects as favourites. The quality of pupils' artwork remains a strength. Pupils are also very enthusiastic about science. In the science lessons we visited, there was a real buzz of excitement as pupils undertook practical investigations. By the end of Year 6, the proportion of pupils attaining the expected standard in science is above average. Teachers assess pupils' achievements in all subjects. Leaders regularly review this information and use it effectively to devise action plans for each year group. Consequently, teaching and the curriculum are tailored to match pupils' needs and boost their progress.
- Another line of enquiry focused on the school's work to develop pupils' understanding of British values, diversity and equalities. In a variety of subjects, pupils learn about different cultures, religions and traditions. This is helping them to understand the importance of respect and tolerance for views and customs that might differ from their own. The opportunities pupils are given to consider ideas about rights and injustice also link well to the principles of British values. Nonetheless, across subjects, there are not enough examples of pupils' learning about people of different genders, sexualities or disabilities. This limits pupils'

understanding of diversity and equalities and the depth of their understanding of British values.

- My final line of enquiry was about how effectively leaders are tackling persistent absence and the reasons for fixed-term exclusions being above average. The majority of pupils attend school regularly. Leaders and the school's pupil well-being coordinator work relentlessly to reduce persistent absence. In this, they work closely with pupils' parents and local authority professionals and make appropriate use of incentives and penalties. While there have been some successes, a significant minority of families do not respond to the considerable efforts made by leaders to improve their children's attendance. Therefore, persistent absence remains high. The school's behaviour policy is very effectively implemented. This includes the use of fixed-term exclusions as an ongoing aspect of behaviour management rather than a last resort. I am satisfied that the decisions leaders take with regard to fixed-term exclusions are right and proper and not taken lightly.

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

Leaders and those responsible for governance should ensure that:

- the curriculum enables pupils to gain a deeper understanding of British values and equality issues, and covers the full range of diversity existing in modern Britain
- persistent absence continues to reduce.

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

Yours sincerely

Margot D'Arcy  
**Ofsted Inspector**

### **Information about the inspection**

I met with you and your deputy headteacher to discuss the school's evaluation of its work and priorities for improvement. I reviewed a range of school documents, including those relating to safeguarding, behaviour and attendance. I considered samples of pupils' work and information about their achievements. We observed learning and behaviour in a sample of lessons and I listened to some pupils read. I had a formal discussion with a group of pupils and spoke to others informally at lunchtime. I met with the chair of the governing body and had a discussion with a representative of the local authority and your school improvement partner. I considered three responses to Ofsted's online parent survey and took account of a larger parental survey that was recently conducted by the school. I reviewed 30 responses to the online staff survey and 45 responses to the online pupil survey.