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Miss Joanne Beetham
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Dear Miss Beetham

Short inspection of Wakefield Lawefield Primary School

Following my visit to the school on 6 March 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.

Based on the evidence gathered during this short inspection, I have identified some priorities for improvement which I advise the school to address. In light of these priorities, the school's next inspection will be a full section 5 inspection. **There is no change to the school's current overall effectiveness grade of good as a result of this inspection.**

You began your post as headteacher in September 2016. A new deputy headteacher was also appointed at that time. Together, you have been committed to implementing a range of systems and routines to help improve pupils' outcomes. Your checks on the quality of teaching, learning and assessment are accurately identifying areas for development. This was an area for improvement identified at the last inspection. The actions you have taken are resulting in an improving picture in the quality of teaching since your time in post.

You are acutely aware of the urgent need to improve pupils' attainment in reading, particularly for boys, by the end of each key stage. Pupils' attainment in reading was in the bottom 10% nationally in 2017 at both key stage 1 and 2. From their starting points, progress in reading has been too slow. Attainment in writing and mathematics was stronger, being generally just below national averages in 2017. Your self-evaluation rightly identified the need to improve the teaching of reading and encourage pupils to develop a love of reading. Leaders' actions are already making a difference. Phonics outcomes have improved and pupils are taking greater interest in reading. However, you acknowledge that boys are not catching up rapidly enough with their reading and leaders are not keeping as close an eye on these differences as they could.

Governors have taken steps to improve their effectiveness. Their strategic plan,

which includes regular visits to the school, helps them to gain an accurate understanding of the school's strengths and weaknesses. This has led to governors being able to challenge with greater rigour and is helping to speed up the rate of development. They are now eager to refine school improvement planning to include reference to attainment and progress for groups of pupils so they can check the impact of leaders' actions on improving outcomes for pupils more precisely.

Safeguarding is effective.

There is a strong culture of keeping pupils safe. You have ensured that all safeguarding arrangements are fit for purpose and records are detailed and of high quality. A team of staff keeps a close eye on the impact of support for vulnerable pupils. The team keeps staff well informed and provides regular training which makes sure that all staff are able to recognise and respond to signs of concern effectively.

Pupils are very happy at the school. They say they feel safe and do not think bullying is an issue. They trust that staff will deal with any issues of poor behaviour firmly and fairly, through the sanction system. Leaders are diligent in ensuring that pupils know how to keep themselves and others safe. Pupils were able to explain with confidence the potential risks associated with online bullying and the use of social media.

Inspection findings

- By the end of key stages 1 and 2, pupils' attainment in reading has been well below the national average for the last two years. Boys in particular are underperforming at the end of each key stage. The difference between their attainment and that of boys nationally is not diminishing. Boys are not making rapid enough progress to enable them to catch up sufficiently. You have identified that the inclusion of measurable milestones in your school improvement plan, relating to attainment and progress for groups of pupils, will support leaders and governors in checking the impact of actions to improve pupils' reading outcomes.
- Leaders have been establishing new routines in the early years. You have made sure that children have more access to a range of opportunities for them to practise their reading, writing and mathematics skills throughout the day. Assessment of children's reading shows an understanding of each individual's next steps. However, you are keen to make sure the new routines become firmly embedded so children develop their early reading skills as quickly as possible. You also recognise that many children begin school with a limited vocabulary. This can be a barrier to learning, not only in the early years but for many pupils throughout key stages 1 and 2. You are, therefore, keen for the new routines to place even more emphasis on children's vocabulary development so pupils are well prepared for learning in key stage 1 and beyond.
- Effective assessment of pupils' phonic knowledge means that staff are aware of pupils' next steps and are able to plan to meet the specific needs of the pupils they are teaching. These assessments also identify pupils who need additional

reading intervention so they can quickly catch up with their peers. You make sure that the impact of intervention groups is closely tracked and this has resulted in precisely targeted provision. Consequently, the proportion of pupils meeting the standard in the Year 1 phonics screening check have improved over time and was in line with the national average for the first time in 2017. However, you accept that there are some inconsistencies in the teaching of phonics which mean that pupils are not becoming confident and fluent readers as quickly as they could. For example, the books which pupils take home to read are not well matched to pupils' phonic knowledge. This prevents pupils, and particularly those who are struggling, from being able to read with accuracy. Additionally, pupils are not routinely re-reading these books. They lack enough opportunities to practise their new-found reading skills, which would support them in making faster progress with their reading.

- Your checks on the quality of teaching and learning of reading identified this weakness in the reading curriculum and that staff needed training to support them in teaching specific reading skills more effectively. Therefore, you adapted timetables so that reading practice became top priority. Training for staff has resulted in teachers being much more confident in understanding the expectations for each year group and how to teach specific reading skills, such as inference. Work in books shows that pupils are becoming more competent in developing their answers by explaining and justifying their thinking. However, you acknowledge that some of the techniques which pupils are developing in whole-class teaching are not being applied when pupils access texts independently. For example, pupils often come across words which are difficult to read or they do not know the meaning of. Rather than check the meaning of unknown vocabulary, some pupils, and in particular boys, carry on reading without understanding all of the words. This means they are not able to read with as much fluency or understanding as needed.
- Leaders have seen greater success in developing a love of reading across the school. Reading ambassadors are recommending books and are organising termly whole-school reading events, all with the aim of inspiring their peers to read widely and often. You have also made sure that parents and carers understand the value of reading and the part they can play in supporting their child's development. Workshops and weekly sessions where parents can come into school to take part in reading activities are being well received. A whole host of other actions, including enticing reading areas in classrooms and the celebration of reading in assemblies, are also contributing to raising the profile of reading in school. As a result of leaders' determined actions, pupils are now much more interested in reading and are choosing to read more regularly. You rightly recognise that actions to strengthen pupils' phonics knowledge and the confidence and fluency with which they read would only serve to strengthen this developing culture further.

Next steps for the school

Leaders and those responsible for governance should ensure that:

- the difference between boys' reading attainment at the end of each key stage and that found nationally for boys from similar starting points diminishes quickly
- the school improvement plan includes milestones related to pupils' attainment and progress to enable leaders and governors to gauge the impact of school improvement actions
- new approaches in the early years quickly take hold so that, by the end of Reception, children develop a rich vocabulary and are well prepared for the key stage 1 curriculum, particularly reading
- at the early stages of learning to read, books are closely matched to the phonic knowledge pupils are learning and that pupils have the opportunity to re-read these texts to build up their confidence and fluency
- the teaching of reading includes a sufficient focus on the meaning of new vocabulary so that pupils are able to read with increasing fluency and understanding.

I am copying this letter to the chair of the governing body, the regional schools commissioner and the director of children's services for Wakefield. 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 the deputy headteacher, the learning mentor and the attendance officer. I also met with three members of the governing body, including the chair and vice-chair, and I met 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 the deputy headteacher, we scrutinised the work of a sample of pupils. I listened to five pupils read. I spoke with several parents and carers at the start of the school day and considered the 10 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 nine responses to the staff survey and the 18 responses to the pupil survey.