

22 March 2018

Mrs Jeannette Stratton  
Headteacher  
Lacewood Primary School  
Carr Head Lane  
Bolton-on-Dearne  
Rotherham  
South Yorkshire  
S63 8DA

Dear Mrs Stratton

### **Short inspection of Lacewood 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 November 2014.

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

You and the leadership team have maintained the good quality of education in the school since the last inspection. Lacewood Primary School is a school where pupils are safe and feel safe. Pupils and parents report that bullying is very rare and behaviour is good. Parents feel well informed about how well their child is doing and say that when their child struggles they are well supported. Parents are especially positive about how approachable staff are. They believe that when they raise a concern, it is dealt with and resolved quickly. Teaching is effective and engages pupils well. Teachers have high expectations of pupils and this means that pupils demonstrate largely positive attitudes to learning and make good progress in learning. Pupils report that learning is fun but agree it is challenging. They say they particularly enjoy the range of subjects and topics they study. You work well with your team, including governors, and you provide a clear vision around how the school can further improve. Everyone has confidence in your leadership and ability to continue raising standards at the school.

At the last inspection, inspectors identified two main areas for improvement, the first of which was to continue to improve the quality of teaching in the school. This area for improvement was further refined by inspectors, by asking that teachers challenge pupils more regularly and set work that pushed them further. Inspectors also recommended that teachers were clearer when advising pupils about how to make improvements in their work. In this regard, the school has made improvements. Teachers' advice and explanations to pupils are precise and clear. Teachers' assessment of pupils' work is accurate and teachers use it well to plan

activities which match pupils' needs closely. As a result, teachers set challenging tasks so pupils really have to think and are able to move on quickly in their learning. The second area for improvement was to improve outcomes in mathematics. This was further refined by asking teachers to support pupils to overcome misconceptions quickly and to provide pupils with more opportunities to use and apply their mathematical skills. Again, these areas have been tackled successfully by the school, resulting in improved outcomes in mathematics, especially in the early years and in key stage 1.

Leaders have an accurate view of the school's strengths and areas for further improvement. You work closely with other senior and middle leaders, as well as governors, to ensure that where improvements are needed they are quickly identified and a plan is implemented. You also review the impact of your actions to ensure that they are working well, and you make adjustments as needed. To this effect, you, and other leaders, have recently revised the reading strategy and have changed the way teachers approach the teaching of reading. You have recognised that there had been some decline in standards in reading and have worked to identify specific gaps in pupils' skills and knowledge. The changes made are very evident in pupils' work and have had a positive impact on pupils' comprehension skills, particularly their ability to deduce and infer information from reading texts. Furthermore, the work has also improved pupils' range of vocabulary and their writing skills across the curriculum. However, at times, leaders' actions to support lower-ability pupils and those who have special educational needs (SEN) and/or disabilities has not been as positive. Most often, these pupils are given useful extra support in lessons by teaching assistants. Many of these adults are skilled and understand their role, and pupils' needs, well. Where this is the case, these pupils progress well. However, there is some inconsistency in the quality of adult support. In a small proportion of classes, where the adult support is weaker, these pupils are not receiving sufficiently effective provision to enable them to rapidly improve their work.

Since the last inspection, attendance has fluctuated, and in 2017 it declined. At the same time, the number of pupils who were persistently absent increased. However, the school's rigorous response to this issue has been effective so attendance has improved this year. Leaders' response has also served to reduce the number of persistently absent pupils in school. Significantly, the attendance of disadvantaged pupils has improved and is now above average. This improvement has been led successfully by a recently appointed assistant inclusion leader who has specific responsibility to work with families where attendance is an issue.

Pupils enjoy school because of improvements to the breadth and content of the curriculum. Pupils report that they have regular trips to broaden their understanding of the world. The trips are linked to topics. For example, Year 6 will soon visit London and will go to a theatre production of 'The Lion King'. This ties in with their current topic about Africa. The topics they study all have a cultural link, which often draws in teaching about different faiths and religions. In this way, you are successfully supporting pupils' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development, and their understanding of fundamental British values. Pupils speak highly of these

experiences, which teach them the importance of celebrating and respecting diversity. Consequently, they demonstrate these values every day, which contributes to their strong conduct and positive attitudes to school life.

### **Safeguarding is effective.**

Leaders and governors ensure that pupils are safe. Training for staff is thorough and regular, and policies and procedures are secure and fit for purpose. Where changes to government guidelines and regulations are made, the school is quick to update staff. This means staff understand their duty to the pupils in their care and know what to do if a concern is raised. In the same way, the school keeps detailed records of the statutory checks they make on staff, including checks on their identity and qualifications. These checks are also made of governors and any volunteers who work in the school. Adults keep detailed records of any issues or incidents relating to pupils' safety and safeguarding. This helps the staff understand the context of a child and any issues related to them, which also helps your close work with external agencies.

Bullying is rare, as pupils and parents report. There are very few serious behaviour incidents and records show that pupils behave very well. All these factors help to keep pupils safe at school.

### **Inspection findings**

- One focus during the inspection was pupils' progress in reading. Since the last inspection, reading standards had declined. However, as a result of your work to improve and broaden pupils' language acquisition, including their range of vocabulary, pupils have a much better understanding of a wider range of texts. As a consequence, pupils are much more successful in deducing and inferring information from their reading. This has led to much better progress and attainment in reading across the school. The work in early years around developing children's phonics knowledge is also strong. The determined approach to develop pupils' phonic skills is continued into key stage 1, where a high proportion passes the test at the end of Year 1. This means pupils are well prepared to develop their reading skills in Year 2 and beyond.
- An area that I looked at was the school's provision for disadvantaged pupils. These pupils' needs have become a higher priority for teachers, and all are aware of the different barriers these pupils can face, which hinder their progress. The assessment system helps teachers to see clearly where underachievement is apparent. Pupils are identified quickly and extra support is provided. As a result, these pupils are doing well and their outcomes are improving, diminishing the gap between them and other pupils in school and nationally.
- I also looked at the provision for pupils who have SEN and/or disabilities. Their progress can fluctuate and I wanted to understand why this was. These pupils are also a priority for the school. Teachers are well informed and trained in how to assist the pupils they teach who have SEN and/or disabilities. This means that, across the school, most of these pupils are well supported. Teaching assistants play an important role in this and most are skilled, take initiative and promote

strong learning behaviours with these pupils. However, as you are aware, some teaching assistants are not as skilled and do not provide quality support. This means that in a small proportion of cases, the needs of some of these pupils are not met well enough.

- During the inspection, I also wanted to understand how well pupils behave. Attendance rates and the number of exclusions have both been an issue since the last inspection. However, the work you have done to improve these areas has been effective. The attendance of different groups has improved. In addition, you have eradicated serious behaviour issues. There have been no exclusions this year.
- The work that leaders have done to support pupils' well-being and ability to manage their behaviour has been very strong. You focus on all pupils' personal, social and emotional well-being in regular sessions where pupils can discuss a wide range of issues. Pupils appreciate these opportunities very much. For those pupils who find it particularly difficult to manage their behaviour, you provide one-to-one sessions to help them learn coping strategies for the classroom and social times. This work is bespoke to each pupil involved and has been highly effective in improving their behaviour and, in turn, their well-being overall.
- Another area I looked at was the provision for children in the early years. Children enter the early years with levels of development typically below what is expected. From these starting points, an increasing proportion reach a good level of development by the end of Reception. This is a result of strong teaching and effective use of assessment. Adults understand the gaps in children's development and use this information to plan activities which interest them and support their development across all areas of learning. The leadership of early years is a strength of the school and the team works well together. One particular outcome of this is the effective way adults interact with the children. They are skilled at getting children to talk about what they are doing and why. This is very important as it supports children's speech and language development, which is generally a weaker area of children's development when they arrive in school.
- I also looked at how well teaching has improved since the last inspection, especially in mathematics. This was previously an area for improvement. Teaching is a strength across all key stages and teachers provide pupils with challenging tasks to support rapid progress. This is the case in all areas of the curriculum, including in mathematics where there is a strong focus on pupils using and applying their skills. However, at times in key stage 2, the expectations around pupils' presentation in mathematics are not as high as they are in key stage 1, or as they are in other subjects in key stage 2. For example, pupils do not routinely use rulers to draw graphs or number lines, or use the squares to write numbers.
- I focused on your assessment systems to see how they contribute to teaching and pupils' learning. Assessment is regular and accurate. This means that teachers and leaders can see what pupils can and cannot do clearly. Importantly, teachers then use this information to plan pupils' next steps in their learning.
- Governors take their roles seriously and have taken up training opportunities to

ensure that they have a strong understanding of the information you give them and can, therefore, question and challenge this information as appropriate. In this way, they have an accurate understanding of the school's work and its impact on pupils.

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

Leaders and those responsible for governance should ensure that:

- the quality of teaching assistants' delivery is consistently strong across the school so that all pupils who work with them, including those who have SEN and/or disabilities, or are lower-ability pupils, get the quality of support they need
- training and support is provided for teaching assistants where standards are not yet high enough
- there are high expectations of pupils' presentation in mathematics in key stage 2 which match the expectations promoted in other subjects.

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

Yours sincerely

Fiona McNally  
**Ofsted Inspector**

### **Information about the inspection**

I visited a number of classes in school to observe teaching and its impact on learning. I also looked at a wide range of pupils' books from all year groups, across a variety of subjects. I met with you and your governors and with other senior and middle leaders. I also held a telephone discussion with a representative from the local authority. I looked at the school's information about the safeguarding of pupils and examined behaviour, attendance and bullying records. I also checked a range of other documentation, such as your self-evaluation, your school development plan and your monitoring information. I held formal discussions with pupils from key stage 1 and key stage 2 and spoke informally to pupils during break time. I also heard four pupils from Year 2 and Year 6 read. I considered the 53 parents' responses to Ofsted's online questionnaire, Parent View, and spoke to a number of parents in the playground as they dropped their children off at school.