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Mrs Michelle Melgram
Headteacher
Shay Lane Primary (J and I) School
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Dear Mrs Melgram

Short inspection of Shay Lane Primary (J and I) School

Following my visit to the school on 20 November 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.

The leadership team has maintained the good quality of education in the school since the last inspection. Since your appointment in September 2018, and previously in your role as acting headteacher, you have ensured that the school continues to improve. As a result, pupils are developing confident reading, writing and mathematics skills. Pupils enjoy reading overall and use their strong phonics skills well to help them sound out unfamiliar words.

Pupils are making strong progress in developing their mathematics skills. They are fluent and confident in making calculations. Pupils enjoy their stimulating lessons and the opportunity to apply their skills. You and your team have identified that their skills are not strong enough in offering reasons for their answers, investigating and solving problems. This is partly because pupils are too quick to ask teachers for help and teachers are too ready to provide answers.

The early years team is working hard to make sure children make strong progress. Children enter the school with skills and abilities that are below those typical for their ages. While the proportion of children achieving a good level of development remains below the national average, children make strong gains in their reading, writing, number and, crucially, their social skills.

You and your deputy headteacher have worked hard to strengthen the work of middle leaders. As a result, your capable middle leaders are taking on increasingly responsible roles and developing a memorable curriculum for pupils. Middle leaders

make effective checks on the quality of teaching and learning and take effective action if they see any underachievement. For example, they have identified that the most able pupils were not consistently challenged. They are working with their teams of teachers and the most able pupils are now increasingly stretched to think hard in lessons.

You and the governors have been successful for the most part in tackling the aspects of the school highlighted by the previous inspection as needing improvement. For example, you and your team use the school's assessment information effectively to check how well pupils are doing. You know which groups of pupils need extra support as well as being able to pinpoint any individual underachievement. For example, you are aware that boys and disadvantaged pupils in some year groups do not do as well as they do in others.

Your careful analysis of assessment information has helped you to develop a sharp and detailed knowledge of pupils. You make sure teachers intervene swiftly and effectively at the first signs that a pupil may be underachieving. This is no easy task because the needs of pupils in different year groups vary widely. For example, the numbers of pupils who speak English as an additional language and of those who are disadvantaged vary from class to class.

Leaders' planning is not sufficiently precise. As a result, while you and your governors can see that improvements have been made, the lack of specific interim checks prevents you from being exact about the extent of that improvement.

Despite changes of staffing throughout the school in recent years, you and your team have kept the school on its trajectory of improvement. The quality of teaching is consistently strong. You and your team quickly spot where teachers need support and offer effective coaching and monitoring to help teachers meet your high expectations.

You and your team have had less success in improving pupils' attendance and reducing the number of pupils who are persistently absent. You work very well with Traveller families. You and your team make sure you know when families are travelling for work and make the very best use of the time they are in school. However, pupils' overall attendance remains below the national average and the levels of persistent absence are well above those found nationally. You have worked well with families to make sure you understand their circumstances and help them to overcome any barriers. You have improved the engagement the school has with parents. Nevertheless, you and your team are acutely aware that pupils' attendance needs to improve quickly.

Safeguarding is effective.

The leadership team has ensured that all safeguarding arrangements are fit for purpose. Staff have been trained well so that they know how to spot the signs and symptoms that might indicate that a child is at risk of harm. Everyone, including pupils, knows how and to whom concerns should be reported. The school works

effectively with external agencies and the school's records show that you and your team act swiftly to make referrals and follow up on concerns.

Pupils are confident in discussing how they can keep themselves safe, including how to keep safe online. Pupils know about the different forms bullying can take and the harm it can do. They told me how they use 'worry boxes' or 'worry monsters' to let their teachers know if they have any concerns. They have faith in staff to act swiftly on their behalf.

You and your team make sure the appropriate checks are made during the staff recruitment processes. However, records kept in staff files are disorganised and sometimes information is stored in different places, making it difficult for you to retrieve information efficiently.

Inspection findings

- Pupils enjoy the broad curriculum. They are excited by the interesting experiences they have at the start of each theme. For example, Year 1 and 2 visited the Eureka! museum to spark their interest in learning about the human body. The school has a flexible approach to the curriculum and makes sure it meets the needs of different groups of pupils. For example, middle leaders were concerned that younger boys were not as engaged in writing as girls. They made sure the texts they were using were more appealing to boys and consequently the work in pupils' books shows that boys' writing is improving.
- The curriculum is designed to make sure pupils have access to challenging texts so that they improve their reading quickly and build a rich and sophisticated vocabulary. Pupils told me about the new words they were learning and how they were able to use them in their writing. Leaders plan carefully to make sure pupils' development of reading, writing and mathematics skills is logical and sequential.
- Pupils' work shows that pupils are becoming more confident in spelling correctly. This is because teachers are paying more detailed attention to pupils' writing accuracy. Pupils take as much care with their writing in topic as they do in English.
- The most able pupils are making strong progress overall, although there are still some discrepancies. Some teachers make sure the most able pupils have additional challenges and have the chance to consider difficult questions. However, this effective practice is not consistent and sometimes teachers do not give pupils enough time to think. As a result, some pupils ask for help from adults too easily, rather than working out problems for themselves.
- When we looked at pupils' mathematics books together, we could see that pupils' reasoning skills are developing. We also noted that the reasons they offered for their answers are not fully developed. We could see that pupils are being asked to carry out some simple problem-solving and investigation tasks, but these are not sufficiently demanding in some cases.
- The progress made by disadvantaged pupils is improving and the differences between the progress they make and that of their peers are reducing. Leaders'

planning has identified some of the barriers facing disadvantaged pupils and this is helping teachers to make sure they give the right support to help these pupils overcome them.

- The early years team has improved children's spoken and written language quickly. Adults make best use of the stimulating provision to extend and enrich children's vocabulary. For example, during my visit, Nursery children were learning about positions. Adults used words such as 'over', 'under' and 'beside' in the outdoor area to make sure children fully understood how to use the vocabulary and apply it to the world around them. As a result of thoughtful provision and skilful support from adults, children make great strides in developing their skills. Nevertheless, the proportion of children achieving a good level of development remains below the national average.

Next steps for the school

Leaders and those responsible for governance should ensure that:

- pupils' attendance improves, and levels of persistent absence are reduced
- pupils get more opportunities to develop their reasoning, investigation and problem-solving skills and so reduce their reliance on adults to provide answers
- leaders' development planning is sharpened so that remaining discrepancies in the progress made by disadvantaged pupils, the most able and boys are reduced
- the proportion of children achieving a good level of development at the end of the Reception Year increases so that it is close to the national average.

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

Joan Hewitt
Ofsted Inspector

Information about the inspection

I met with you and other senior and middle leaders and members of the governing body. I met with the school's improvement partner. I visited lessons, to some of which you accompanied me. I looked at pupils' work with leaders and spoke informally with some pupils. I listened to four pupils read. I looked at the results from Parent View (Ofsted's online questionnaire) and considered the 34 responses to it, including the 21 written comments. I evaluated the responses of 20 staff and 17 pupils to Ofsted's surveys. I examined a range of documents, including information about safeguarding and the school's self-evaluation and improvement plan.