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Mr Christopher Shields  
Headteacher  
Walton-le-Dale Community Primary School  
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Dear Mr Shields

### **Short inspection of Walton-le-Dale Community Primary School**

Following my visit to the school on 31 October 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 January 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 the previous inspection, you have used your considerable knowledge and clarity of purpose to bring about a range of improvements to the quality of education in the school. You have established a strong and effective senior leadership team who share your ambition and drive. You have overseen renovations to the premises that ensure that your pupils benefit from a well-maintained and welcoming environment. Pupils' work is displayed attractively, which helps to make them feel proud of their achievements. You have also considered your pupils' emotional well-being by the appointment of an emotional literacy support assistant.

You have successfully addressed the areas for improvement that featured in the last inspection report. You have introduced a range of strategies that have ensured that the quality of teaching is now much stronger. These include a more structured approach to writing, which involves the use of high-quality reading texts. Teachers now enable pupils to develop greater variety in the structure of their sentences, with greater accuracy in spelling and grammar. Teachers also help pupils to develop a more sophisticated writing style, which was evident in examples of pupils' work which I analysed during my visit.

Evidence from pupils' books also shows that teachers now provide pupils with more opportunities to apply their writing skills in other subjects. For example, in

geography in key stage 2 pupils write in detail about the features of contrasting environments, such as rainforests and deserts.

Teachers now have higher expectations of the most able pupils in writing and provide them with suitably challenging work. In Year 6, for instance, most-able pupils write in an engaging style and with sophisticated structures. An example of this is: 'The mythical beast was about to make its arrival.' More pupils in this group now achieve greater depth by the time they leave Year 6. However, the proportion of pupils who reach this standard is still not as high as it could be.

You now have a refined assessment and tracking system, which you have developed since the last inspection. It is highly detailed and enables you to track the progress of groups of pupils. You also ensure that there are now regular meetings to evaluate pupils' progress. These meetings offer the opportunity for leaders and staff to identify pupils who need extra support to improve or enhance their progress. These actions have contributed effectively to the considerably improved picture of teaching and learning in the school.

You and your leadership team have an honest and very accurate understanding of the quality of education in the school. You have devised detailed plans for improvement. These include suitable actions and the resources required to carry out those actions. However, you have not focused sufficiently on the intended impact of your actions on pupils' achievement.

You develop the spiritual, moral, social and cultural aspects of your pupils' education effectively. You have, for example, expanded the range of school clubs. Pupils enjoy taking part in sporting activities that now include rugby, netball and golf. You also make effective use of your personal skills in music to run a highly popular school choir, which regularly performs at public events.

Parents who spoke to me or responded to Parent View, Ofsted's online survey, were very positive about the school. They said that their children feel happy and safe in school and that they make good progress. Examples of the comments that parents made include references to 'positive, caring teachers' and a school that 'takes great pride in being a happy family'.

Staff, too, are very positive and their morale is high. They appreciate the range of training that you and your leadership team provide for them. They told me that it improves their skills as teachers. They also said that you manage their workload effectively by, for example, providing dedicated time for assessment tasks.

I spoke with a group of pupils from key stage 2, who were articulate and very polite. They told me that they enjoy coming to school and appreciate the range of clubs you provide. The pupils spoke knowledgeably about the work you do to encourage healthy eating, such as providing a salad bar at lunch every day. They also enjoy the opportunities you provide for them to take on responsibilities. These include becoming members of the school council and acting as 'buddies' to younger pupils.

The local authority has an accurate view of standards and priorities in the school. It provides appropriate and effective support and rightly regards the leadership of the school as strong.

### **Safeguarding is effective.**

The leadership team has ensured that all safeguarding arrangements are fit for purpose. The school's record of necessary checks on members of staff complies with the government's current guidance. You have an electronic system for recording concerns about pupils, which is thorough and detailed. In your role as designated safeguarding lead, you liaise effectively with external agencies, such as children's services, as required.

The culture of safeguarding in the school is strong. You train your staff well in safeguarding procedures and they are knowledgeable about the various signs of abuse. Pupils feel safe in school because adults know them well and deal effectively with any worries they may have. Pupils know how to stay safe in various situations, for example when they are using the internet. Staff give pupils valuable information, such as the importance of not sharing personal information when they are online. Governors are well trained in safeguarding and knowledgeable about systems in school. There is a dedicated safeguarding governor who meets regularly with the designated lead to discuss safeguarding matters. As a result, governors make an important contribution to ensuring that safeguarding in school is effective.

### **Inspection findings**

- At the start of the day, I shared with you some key lines of enquiry, which I followed during the inspection. I have already written about how effectively you have addressed the areas for improvement identified at the last inspection. I have also reported on the effectiveness of safeguarding.
- Another focus for the inspection concerned the decline in progress in reading, writing and mathematics in Year 6 in 2018. This cohort had experienced weaker teaching earlier in key stage 2, along with less accurate assessment than is now in place. You challenged underperformance effectively in teaching, to ensure that the quality improved. You have also strengthened the accuracy of assessment and tracking processes. Although progress was not as strong as in previous Year 6 cohorts, this group of pupils attained well. The proportion of pupils who reached the expected standard in reading, writing and mathematics was above the national average. You analysed the performance of this cohort and put actions in place to improve progress for current pupils. These include a further embedding of your approach to teaching mathematics to ensure that pupils master the knowledge, understanding and skills of the subject thoroughly. You have also put an increased emphasis on developing pupils' inference skills and vocabulary in English. Consequently, current pupils in Year 6 are making good progress.
- Another key line of enquiry was related to the progress in reading, writing and mathematics of current pupils across the school who are disadvantaged. The provisional assessment information for 2018 showed that, by the end of Year 6,

progress in mathematics was below the national average for non-disadvantaged pupils. Additionally, attainment in reading, writing and mathematics was below the national average in Year 6 in 2018 and in Year 2 in 2017. You have more sharply focused your processes for assessing and tracking this group of pupils. You now use regular progress meetings with teachers to identify support that will best meet each pupil's needs. These include providing extra sessions that, for example, have an emphasis on improving problem-solving and reasoning skills in mathematics. Evidence from books and the school's own assessment information shows that most current pupils who are disadvantaged across both key stages are now making good progress in all three subjects. For example, in mathematics in Year 2, pupils confidently answer questions about inequalities and solve related problems. The attainment of current disadvantaged pupils in reading, writing and mathematics is now improving towards that of other pupils. However, you have not yet reduced the difference in attainment as fully as possible.

- My next key line of enquiry concerned the progress of the most able pupils in reading, writing and mathematics. Historical assessment information showed that the proportion of pupils attaining greater depth in these three subjects at the end of key stage 1 was not consistently close to the national average. The same was true of pupils reaching the higher standard in key stage 2. You have ensured that teachers now have a bank of resources to enable them routinely to provide work that challenges the most able. Evidence from books and assessment information show that many of the most able pupils are now making strong progress towards achieving as highly as they can. However, this number of pupils is still not as high as it could be.
- Finally, leaders understand their statutory responsibilities well. Governors have a clear appreciation of the school's strengths and areas for development. They provide stringent challenge to you and your leadership team, which reflects the strength of their ambition for the school to provide the best education possible for your pupils.

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

Leaders and those responsible for governance should ensure that:

- they continue to provide challenging work for the most able pupils, so that, in reading, writing and mathematics, more of them reach the higher standard by the end of Year 6 and greater depth by the end of Year 2
- they continue with their strategies to strengthen further the progress that disadvantaged pupils make in reading, writing and mathematics and to diminish further the difference in attainment between this group of pupils and other pupils
- they sharply focus the intended impact of their action plans for school improvement on pupils' outcomes.

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

Yours sincerely

Mark Quinn  
**Her Majesty's Inspector**

### **Information about the inspection**

With you and your deputy headteacher, I carried out short visits to the early years and all year groups in key stage 1 and key stage 2. I scrutinised a range of documentation, including the school's self-evaluation summary, action plans for school improvement, minutes of meetings of the governing body and records connected with the safeguarding of children. I held discussions with you and your deputy headteacher, other members of staff, governors, parents and pupils. I had a discussion with a representative of the local authority. I analysed pupils' work and the school's own assessment information. I evaluated 50 responses received through Parent View, Ofsted's online survey. I also analysed 19 responses to the staff survey and 66 responses to the pupil survey.