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Mrs Lisa Keighley
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Dear Mrs Keighley

Short inspection of Blakehill Primary School

Following my visit to the school on 13 February 2019, 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 2015.

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 specific areas. This may indicate that the school has improved significantly overall. Therefore, I am recommending that the school's next inspection be a section 5 inspection.

Since the last inspection, the leadership structure in the school has changed. In September 2015, the headteacher became the executive headteacher of this school and another local primary school. At this time, you were appointed internally as the head of school. A number of new teachers and teaching assistants have been appointed since the last inspection.

You and other senior leaders have used this restructure as an opportunity to develop the leadership at all levels within the school. Members of staff now work in teams to lead improvements in the quality of teaching in all subjects. This has been a crucial factor in securing the highly effective teaching practice which is now typical within the school.

This focus on teamwork is evident in all aspects of the school and encapsulated in the school's motto, 'together we can'. For example, pupils are adept at supporting one another in lessons. They also take part in frequent group projects, competing against other teams and gaining 'points' for working cooperatively together. Your

focus on working together to achieve high standards has created an atmosphere in which all members of the school community strive to be the best they can be.

Safeguarding is effective.

The leadership team has ensured that all safeguarding arrangements are fit for purpose. You place strong emphasis on providing support for pupils and families whose circumstances make them vulnerable. Staff with designated responsibility for safeguarding liaise effectively with external agencies where appropriate. Staff understand their responsibilities to keep children safe. You have ensured that necessary checks are carried out on adults to ensure their suitability to work with children. Records in respect of this are well maintained.

Pupils' emotional and social development is given high priority. This is reflected in the strong relationships which exist between staff and pupils. Pupils who shared their views during the inspection said that they trusted members of staff to support them with any worries which may arise.

You recognise the importance of pupils' good attendance in keeping them safe. There was a rise in pupils' absence rates in 2016 and 2017, and you have been successful in reversing this. Pupils' attendance is now just above the national average. You identified correctly that disadvantaged pupils' attendance was too low. Along with pastoral staff, you have introduced strategies aimed at removing individual pupils' barriers to attendance. For example, the introduction of the 'morning club' has been effective in promoting pupils' smooth transition into their class each day. You check frequently on the attendance rates of disadvantaged pupils and work closely with their parents and carers. As a result, the attendance rate for this group of pupils has improved considerably.

Inspection findings

- At the last inspection, you were asked to improve the effectiveness of the work of teaching assistants in supporting pupils' learning. You provided professional development for teaching assistants to equip them with the subject knowledge and the strategies they need to support pupils effectively. Teaching assistants are adept at knowing when to intervene and when to allow pupils to work independently. You have also provided training for teachers which has ensured that they direct their assistants well. Consequently, teaching assistants are now highly effective in supporting pupils and leading groups of pupils.
- The previous inspection report also identified that activities in reading and mathematics were sometimes too easy, especially for the most able pupils. Along with other senior leaders, you have revised your approach to teaching these subjects. Teachers now provide work which challenges all pupils appropriately. Pupils of all abilities rise to this challenge and achieve well.
- In reading lessons, teachers use high-quality texts containing suitably complex vocabulary and concepts as a stimulus. Teachers demonstrate their well-developed subject knowledge through the challenging questions they pose. Pupils show a deepening understanding of texts and books, particularly through their

ability to infer meaning, make predictions and comment on an author's choice of words. Teachers extend pupils' learning effectively by requiring pupils to justify their answers by using evidence from the text they are reading.

- Pupils' learning in reading is often linked to their topics in other subjects. This supports pupils' understanding of texts and increases their motivation to read. For example, during the inspection, Year 4 pupils were studying a poem which was linked to their prior learning about the Second World War. They were able to understand the poem because of the knowledge they had gained from history lessons.
- Along with other leaders, you have employed a wide range of strategies aimed at boosting pupils' enthusiasm for reading. You have given reading a prominent focus in the school through author visits, attractive reading areas, a reading café for parents, a celebrity library opening and an outdoor library for pupils to swap books. Pupils also appreciate the opportunity to be 'reading buddies', which involves listening to younger pupils reading each day. Teachers find creative ways to develop pupils' reading skills. For example, during the inspection, pupils developed their understanding of 'The Iron Man' through studying a text message conversation between characters. You check on how these strategies feed pupils' enjoyment of reading. As a result of the school's work, most pupils have an appreciation for books and enjoy the way stories fuel their imagination.
- The teaching of phonics is effective and, consequently, pupils develop their early reading skills well. The level of challenge for pupils, including the most able, is appropriately high. As a result, pupils learn to read fluently.
- In mathematics, pupils have frequent opportunities to develop their number, problem-solving and reasoning skills. Pupils' books show that teachers intervene appropriately to address any misconceptions and this leads to pupils making strong progress. Teachers challenge pupils to provide explicit explanations of their mathematical thinking. Many pupils then become independent in justifying their mathematical explanations.
- Pupils particularly enjoy the opportunities they have to apply their mathematical knowledge to their learning in other subjects. For example, during their topic on Ancient Greece, Year 6 pupils used Pythagoras' theorem to calculate angles when designing ramps for vehicles. Similarly, Year 4 pupils used their skills in measuring accurately when designing and making greenhouses in their design and technology topic.
- The emphasis on making learning both fun and challenging was reflected in all lessons observed during the inspection and is clear in work in pupils' books over time. Pupils work hard and demonstrate consistently positive attitudes to learning. Teachers have suitably high expectations of pupils and have ensured that effective routines are in place. Pupils across all year groups show high levels of motivation and independence.
- Children in the early years make strong progress in developing their understanding of mathematics. Adults are skilled in planning activities which are open-ended. They approach teaching with no limits on what they believe children

can achieve, aiming high from the outset. This ensures that adults' questioning and steering of children represents a good level of challenge.

- As a result of high-quality teaching, by the end of key stage 2, pupils' outcomes are significantly above the national average for reading, writing and mathematics. You identified, rightly, that 2018 published outcomes for pupils at the end of the early years and key stage 1 represented broadly average attainment in these three subjects. You have since focused on further strengthening the quality of teaching in these phases. Consequently, pupils' work now shows even stronger progress across all year groups.
- Since taking up post, you have galvanised the staff team, including middle leaders, to secure significant improvements to the quality of teaching. The dedication shown by leaders and staff is appreciated by many parents, who praise the school effusively for the quality of education their children receive.
- Governors know the school and the priorities for further improvement well. They receive detailed information from you and other leaders and use this to challenge leaders about pupils' outcomes and attendance. However, your plans for improvement are not always tightly focused on pupils' outcomes. This means that governors are not able to hold you to account as effectively as they should.

Next steps for the school

Leaders and those responsible for governance should ensure that:

- improvement plans are focused precisely on pupils' outcomes and contain measurable milestones which are used by leaders and governors to hold colleagues to account effectively.

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

Yours sincerely

Karine Hendley
Her Majesty's Inspector

Information about the inspection

During this inspection, I met with you, the executive headteacher, a local authority representative, a group of governors and other senior and middle leaders. I observed teaching jointly with you and the executive headteacher in classes across all key stages. I scrutinised pupils' work, alongside the leaders for reading and mathematics. I listened to pupils read and observed pupils' behaviour around the school, including at play and lunchtime. I spoke to pupils, both formally and informally, and considered the 34 responses to Ofsted's pupil survey. I met with several parents at the start of the school day and took account of the 114 responses

to Ofsted's online questionnaire Parent View and the 63 free-text responses. I reviewed school documentation, including the school's self-evaluation and improvement plans, as well as information about pupils' outcomes, behaviour, safeguarding and attendance. I spoke with staff members during the inspection and considered the 16 responses to Ofsted's staff questionnaire.