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Mrs Claire Holgate
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Dear Mrs Holgate

Short inspection of Barden Primary School

Following my visit to the school on 25 April 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 December 2014.

This school continues to be good.

The leadership team has maintained the good quality of education in the school since the last inspection.

Before you took up post in the summer term of 2018, there had been a period of turbulence in the school's leadership. You have instigated and led improvements to many aspects of the school. Many parents and carers appreciate the increase in communication between school and home. They share the opinion that you 'put your heart and soul into the school'. They also stated that 'Staff should be recognised for the respect they show towards the local community, which means the school is well thought of and loved.' The vast majority of those who responded to Parent View – Ofsted's online questionnaire – would recommend this school. One parent captured the views of many others when describing staff as 'excellent and doing a brilliant job'.

You and the new leadership team have effectively introduced improvements in how pupils' academic progress across subjects is assessed, recorded and closely monitored. This ensures that leaders are swift in providing bespoke support when pupils fall behind with their work. Staff told me that you have introduced better ways of working, which are more efficient but which maintain a rounded focus on pupils' emotional, social and academic development. Despite the many changes and the need for staff to attend a significant amount of training, staff morale is high.

At the previous inspection in 2014, inspectors asked the leadership team, including

governors, to improve the quality of teaching to raise achievement further. They identified the need to increase the level of challenge in lessons, particularly for the most able in mathematics. From talking to the leaders of mathematics, it is clear that an effective whole-school approach to mathematics has been adopted. From scrutinising pupils' books and our joint observations of teaching and learning, it was evident that teachers have high expectations of what pupils can achieve. Teachers plan activities so that groups and individuals are appropriately challenged and no time is wasted. Across year groups, current pupils are making good progress and the proportion reaching the higher standards at the end of Year 6 was in line with the national average in 2018.

Inspectors also asked that teachers plan activities so that pupils can use their initiative in applying their knowledge, skills and understanding to real-life situations. You and your staff ensure that the curriculum offers an extensive range of learning experiences to broaden pupils' horizons. Pupils told me how much they enjoyed the trip on a steam train as part of their topic on the Second World War and how this inspired them with their writing. Similarly, pupils talked animatedly about how much they had enjoyed the whole-school trip to see 'Annie' at a theatre in Manchester. One pupil told me that they would now like to work as an entertainer as a result of this experience. Older pupils told me how much they enjoyed the residential trip to an outdoor education centre where they were challenged to try a raft of new sports. You and your staff certainly go the extra mile in providing pupils with memorable experiences beyond their local community to raise their aspirations. Pupils told me how they are inspired to work in professional careers in education, health and law and know that they must work hard to achieve these goals.

Pupils clearly enjoy coming to school and take pride in their work. They know what they need to do to improve their work and are proud of their achievements. Pupils who spoke to me said that teachers make learning fun but that they are given work that challenges them to continually improve. The high levels of respect that they have for each other, and the extremely positive relationships fostered within the school, contribute to the good progress that pupils are now making in a range of subjects. You, your staff and volunteers inspire a love of learning. The exemplary behaviour of pupils is a credit to you, your staff and pupils' families.

Safeguarding is effective.

As the designated safeguarding leader, together with your deputy safeguarding leaders, you ensure that all safeguarding arrangements meet requirements. You make sure that staff fully understand their duty and follow systems and procedures for logging concerns. You ensure that all necessary checks are made on the suitability of staff to work with children. When I arrived at the start of the inspection, the effectiveness of procedures to check on those visiting school was clear for me to see.

You make sure that the promotion of safeguarding throughout the school has a high profile. You provide staff with regular training that is up to date so that they and members of the governing body understand the current guidance. You are prompt

in making referrals to the local authority. You and your dynamic pastoral team work well with a range of external agencies to secure expertise to support pupils' welfare, as and when necessary. You and your staff provide exceptional care and support for pupils and their families. Pupils like the fact that, should they have any worries, they have the choice of speaking to an adult in school or typing their concern onto a confidential online facility accessed through the school website. Your staff provide a haven where children and their families are loved and cared for.

Inspection findings

- As part of this inspection, I focused on several agreed aspects of the school's work. I looked at how effectively the early years provision is developing children's communication, literacy and numeracy skills. The early years leader has worked with the local authority in the last year to develop this provision and, particularly, the outdoor area. Staff ensure a smooth transition into Reception by visiting the homes of children, ensuring that a trilingual member of staff translates for families who have limited English. The vast majority of children start school with limited experience in many areas of learning. The early years team is skilled in planning activities to develop the literacy, numeracy, physical and emotional skills of children. Children were using capital letters at the start of sentences, finger spaces between words and full stops at the end of sentences. Children were also using their skills in phonics to work out the spellings of words. From low starting points, children make great strides with their literacy skills.
- Outdoors, a teacher continued the development of language as she worked with a small group of children in the construction area. The teacher used the term 'builders' merchants', which children were encouraged to repeat. The teacher then encouraged the children to count the bricks before placing them in two wheelbarrows. Children were able to add together the number of bricks in each wheelbarrow and they discussed whether these had been evenly shared. The development of numeracy skills was strong and children were enjoying learning. Staff ensure that learning journeys are used well to share with parents the activities that their children engage in at school. Parents also take photographs of children's activities beyond school and write about what they have done together. This is developing family learning beyond school in order for children to catch up. Boys and girls currently in Reception are making good progress from low starting points.
- I also explored how you have improved the way that reading is taught across the school. From a young age, children develop a love of books and stories through captivating storytelling in early years. You have ensured that teachers have the correct skills and knowledge to use assessment information accurately to build effectively on what pupils already know. As a result, learning activities now closely match the needs and interests of the pupils. Pupils have opportunities to extend their vocabulary through well-crafted challenges during daily guided reading sessions. From pupils' guided reading books, it was clear to see that staff skilfully use questions that develop pupils' ideas and refine their skills. Nonetheless, pupils' inference skills and range of vocabulary remain areas for further development so that more pupils reach higher standards in reading by the end of Year 6. Weekly class trips to the library encourage pupils to read a wide

range of genres. Older pupils told me who their favourite authors are and why. In current year groups, boys and girls alike, those who speak English as an additional language and pupils who have special educational needs and/or disabilities are making good progress from their starting points. Leaders ensure that parents are given opportunities to develop their own skills so that they can encourage their children's reading. It is apparent, however, that some pupils do not read regularly beyond school and this hinders their progress.

- Finally, I investigated pupils' attendance. You ensure that staff promptly follow up any absences. You know your families extremely well and staff work hard to build trust and positive relationships. You work closely with other professionals, outside agencies and charities to ensure that families receive the guidance and support that they need. Pupils understand the importance of attending school every day. As a result, attendance continues to improve and is now closer to national figures. The proportion of pupils who are persistently absent is reducing. However, the persistent absence of too many pupils, due to unauthorised holidays in term time, has a negative impact on overall attendance and is detrimental to the progress that these pupils make.

Next steps for the school

Leaders and those responsible for governance should ensure that:

- teachers continue to focus on building pupils' vocabulary and inference skills so that more reach the higher standards by the end of Year 6
- they, staff and external agencies continue to work with families whose children's progress is seriously hampered by too many absences.

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

Naomi Taylor
Her Majesty's Inspector

Information about the inspection

During this inspection, I observed teaching and learning jointly with you. I held meetings with subject leaders, senior leaders, the chair and other members of the governing body, yourself as the designated safeguarding leader and one of the deputy safeguarding leaders. I analysed the responses to Ofsted's online questionnaire, Parent View, and I spoke informally with parents at the school gates to seek their views. I also took account of free-text responses from parents. I

analysed the responses to Ofsted's online staff questionnaire and I spoke to several staff informally during the day. I held a meeting with pupils and spoke informally with pupils during breaks and in lessons. There were no responses to Ofsted's online pupil questionnaire. During the inspection, I reviewed a range of school documents. These included: the school's development plans and self-evaluation documents; minutes of the governing body meetings; safeguarding documentation; records relating to pupils' behaviour and attendance; the school website; school policies; and pupils' work.