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Mrs Jo Briggs
Headteacher
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Dear Mrs Briggs

Short inspection of Hardy Mill Primary School

Following my visit to the school on 10 July 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 February 2015.

This school continues to be good.

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

Leaders' ambition to develop successful, independent and motivated learners, and for every child to be the best they can be, characterises the school's ethos. The overwhelmingly positive comments from parents and carers show this to be the case. Many parents refer to how well their children are learning and how the teaching and lessons inspire and motivate their children. One parent's comment, 'My children go into school happy and come home happy,' reflected the views of many. Parents and pupils are not the only stakeholders who are happy. All the staff who responded to the online questionnaire said that they enjoy working at the school and are proud to do so. Staff consider that leaders support them effectively and are considerate of their well-being.

Leaders set high expectations for the quality of teaching. They visit lessons, review pupils' work and analyse information about pupils' progress and attainment to check that their expectations are being met. Pupils' test and assessment results reflect the impact of teachers' effectiveness. These show that pupils in all phases achieve well. By the end of Reception, the proportion of children attaining a good level of development is consistently above average. By the end of key stages 1 and 2, pupils' attainment in reading, writing and mathematics is also above average. Pupils say that their teachers help them to do their best. They described teachers as helpful, fair, encouraging and inspiring.

Leaders ensure that pupils receive a broad curriculum, enriched by a range of educational visits, visitors and extra-curricular clubs. In addition to reading, writing and mathematics, pupils said how much they enjoy subjects such as drama, music, art and physical education. Currently, your deputy headteacher is leading staff in a radical review of the curriculum. The focus for this work is the wider curriculum, specifically subjects other than English and mathematics. So far, leaders have agreed what pupils will learn and when this content will be taught. Work to ensure that teaching enables pupils to remember and understand the key knowledge and ideas in each subject has begun but is not complete for all subjects.

You and your staff make effective use of assemblies and weeks with a specific theme, such as 'diversity week' to enhance pupils' personal development. These opportunities make a valuable contribution to pupils' understanding of the principles of British values and the importance of respecting people's differences. Teachers reinforce these principles within the wider curriculum, for example when pupils learn about significant people in history. Overall, however, these opportunities are not extensive. Consequently, pupils are not as informed as they might be about British values and diversity in modern Britain.

At the last inspection, leaders were asked to ensure that teachers challenged the most able pupils, particularly in writing. They were also asked to ensure that phase leaders were more involved in checking the success of their work to improve teaching and pupils' achievement. Leaders have responded very well to both of these recommendations. The quality of writing in pupils' books and on display around the school is stunning. Pupils' writing very clearly reflects leaders' and teachers' high expectations. Over time, statutory assessments of pupils' writing at the end of both key stages show good improvement and increasing proportions of pupils writing at greater depth. Test and assessment results for reading and mathematics also show larger proportions of pupils attaining highly in these subjects. Since the last inspection, a number of subject and phase leaders have been particularly successful in improving teaching and learning. In computing, for example, the leader has improved colleagues' subject knowledge. The result is more accurate teacher assessments and greater challenge in the work set for pupils. Leaders hope to use this model to improve the effectiveness of teaching in other subjects further.

Governors bring experience and commitment to their role and undertake regular training to enhance their effectiveness. Governors hold leaders to account for pupils' achievement and are keen to know how improvement initiatives are progressing. They meet up with subject leaders, who explain what pupils have been learning and show examples of pupils' work.

Safeguarding is effective.

The leadership team has ensured that all safeguarding arrangements are fit for purpose. All statutory checks are made to ensure the suitability of adults working in the school. Staff receive regular child protection training. They know the signs that might indicate neglect or potential abuse and how to respond should children share

concerns of a safeguarding nature with them. Your records show that staff are vigilant in passing any concerns to you, as the designated safeguarding leader, and that you act on these quickly and correctly. Your safeguarding records, including any allegations of bullying, are comprehensively detailed and meticulously maintained. You liaise very effectively with professional agencies and do not shy away from challenging decisions you consider are not in pupils' best interests. Leaders and staff have created a safe and caring culture.

All the parents who completed the online questionnaire said that their children feel safe in school. All the pupils who completed the pupil questionnaire said that they would feel confident to speak to an adult in school if they were worried. You ensure that pupils are educated about how to stay safe, including when using the internet. You provide parents with comprehensive information on this and other safeguarding matters and remind parents about the dangers and legalities of children using social media.

Inspection findings

- As pupils achieve so well in reading, writing and mathematics, I wanted to find out more about their learning in other subjects. I chose to focus on history, which pupils learn as part of a topic. In key stage 1, pupils' work shows that they develop an awareness of the past and are introduced to some important people and events in history. In key stage 2, pupils' books show that they are taught a suitable amount of knowledge and vocabulary relating to the themes they study, for example the Anglo-Saxons or the Vikings.
- There is less evidence of pupils developing an understanding of important historical ideas, such as cause and consequence, and the reliability of evidence sources. These were aspects that pupils were unsure of when I spoke with them about history. The curriculum plans for history show that leaders expect key historical ideas to be continuously developed in whatever aspect of history pupils study. Ensuring that this intention becomes a secure part of the teaching of history and that the principle is applied to other subjects is an area for improvement.
- I wanted to know if pupils who had not attained the expected phonics standard in last year's phonics screening checks had been helped to catch up. You were able to demonstrate that quality teaching of phonics, including extra support for pupils who needed it, has enabled these pupils to make up lost ground. When reading, pupils use phonics as their first strategy to tackle unknown words and do so successfully. Many of the pupils who did not initially attain the expected phonics standard are now reading fluently. They inject expression into their reading, which shows that they are understanding what they read.
- My final line of enquiry was about exclusions. The most recent exclusion data for the school (2016/17) showed that the rates of fixed-term and repeat exclusions were above average. Data for the last two years is more positive and in line with national figures. Leaders only use exclusion as a last resort and for serious incidents of misbehaviour. Leaders follow all legal procedures and ensure that pupils follow a detailed reintegration programme when they return to school.

Your records show that the support provided for previously excluded pupils has led to improvements in pupils' behaviour. Incidents of poor behaviour are very rare. Parents, pupils and staff think behaviour is good. The vast majority of pupils and parents consider that any incidents of bullying are handled effectively. Your records confirm that these views are well founded.

Next steps for the school

Leaders and those responsible for governance should ensure that:

- in implementing the wider curriculum, teaching approaches enable pupils to learn the key knowledge and ideas specific to each subject across the wider curriculum, so that they know and remember more as they get older
- the curriculum enables pupils to gain a deeper understanding of fundamental British values and diversity in modern Britain.

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

Yours sincerely

Margot D'Arcy
Ofsted Inspector

Information about the inspection

I met with you and your deputy headteacher to discuss leaders' evaluations of the school's work and priorities for improvement. You and I visited a sample of lessons in key stages 1 and 2 and in the early years. I listened to pupils from Year 2 and Year 3 read. I reviewed samples of pupils' writing, and work in a sample of pupils' topic books. I considered information you provided to show how the school educates pupils about diversity and British values. I analysed a range of school documents, including those relating to safeguarding and behaviour. I met with a group of pupils from key stage 2 and spoke to other pupils informally at lunchtime. I met with four governors and had a telephone conversation with your school improvement partner. I spoke with parents informally at the start of the school day. I considered 68 responses to Ofsted's online parent survey, Parent View, including 35 written comments. I took account of 19 responses to Ofsted's online staff survey and 31 responses to Ofsted's online pupil survey.