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Mr David Perrin
Headteacher
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Dear Mr Perrin

Short inspection of Heptonstall Junior, Infant and Nursery School

Following my visit to the school on 18 October 2016, 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 2011.

This school continues to be good.

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

Over the last few years, pupils' attainment has risen. In partnership with parents, you continue to nurture a positive culture and strong ethos. Consequently, pupils look forward to their climb up the cobbled lane to school each day where you greet them. They feel valued, and develop a strong sense of community.

Leaders' and teachers' active promotion of pupils' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development is a strength of the school. You and other adults prepare pupils well for life in modern Britain. This work is exemplified by the pupils' open-mindedness, for example about gender identity, and the way in which they are confident to share and justify their opinions. Pupils show respect for each other, evident in the way they work and play together and listen to each other's views.

You have responded well to the demands of the revised national curriculum. The teaching of writing and mathematics successfully challenges the most able pupils in upper key stage 2. This is critical, as a number of the most able pupils missed the high score in the new, more demanding 2016 key stage 2 tests in these subjects. Key stage 1 and lower key stage 2 teachers also challenge and support the most able pupils to help more of them reach a greater depth of understanding and the higher standards of which they should be capable. However, this challenge and

support are not consistent. You have rightly identified this as a priority for development. Some aspects of teaching in the early years do not stretch pupils as much as in the rest of the school.

The one area for improvement identified at the last inspection was for leaders to improve the use of assessment, tracking and monitoring systems. In partnership with the local cluster of schools, you have introduced a suitable pupil achievement tracking system that helps you and the teaching team to keep an eye on each pupil's progress and to set targets for them. Teachers largely use assessment information well to plan the next steps in each pupil's learning. You and governors recognise the need to analyse more deeply the information this system provides about the achievement of groups.

Governors have the range of skills and experience needed to help them fulfil their statutory duties. The governing body takes its safeguarding duties seriously, checking policies and practice regularly. Governors visit the school from time to time to seek verification that what leaders tell them is accurate. You and governors acknowledge that school improvement planning needs sharpening to include targets that are more precise, and timescales by which these targets should be met. This will help governors to check more rigorously the difference leaders' actions make to pupils' outcomes. Sharper planning will also help the governing body to be more tenacious in the way it challenges you and other leaders.

Safeguarding is effective.

You and the governing body have ensured that all safeguarding arrangements are fit for purpose and records are detailed. For example, you ensure that all the proper checks are carried out when recruiting staff so that only adults considered suitable to work with children are appointed.

Leaders, teachers and all other adults have regular training to keep them updated on their child protection responsibilities. This training includes information about the latest changes to the statutory guidance contained in 'Keeping Children Safe in Education' (2016), a document that all staff have read and understood. Consequently, staff know the signs to look for that indicate that a child may be being harmed or at risk of harm.

Teachers ensure that pupils have a good knowledge about the potential dangers of the internet, including social networking. Pupils know to keep personal information private and what to do if they were to experience online bullying. Pupils say that bullying is rare and that adults deal with it really well if it does occur.

Inspection findings

- Pupils work consistently hard in lessons because teachers provide interesting work that is largely well matched to pupils' needs. Pupils enjoy collaborating on tasks. They share their ideas and listen to the views of others. Teachers help pupils to assess their own learning and to take responsibility for the progress they make.
- Pupils behave well. They are polite and well-mannered, holding doors open without being asked. They remember to say please and thank you. Adults trust pupils to exercise self-discipline, for example, to move around the school without being too closely supervised. Pupils in return show they can indeed be trusted.
- Leaders and teachers prepare pupils well for life in modern Britain. Many pupils have visited a church and a mosque to find out how people of faith practise their religion. The school is a Stonewall Champions school. Pupils learn about the principles of democracy, as prospective school councillors prepare and give speeches and their peers cast votes. Pupils know about influential world leaders such as Nelson Mandela and Martin Luther King. They learn about their heritage through history lessons; for example, how British people are descended from peoples of many cultures and nationalities.
- Teaching challenges upper key stage 2 pupils exceptionally well, including the most able pupils. Pupils show resilience as they tackle a range of tricky mathematical problems and use their reasoning skills well. Similarly, the teaching of writing helps many pupils write to a high standard. Pupils successfully organise their writing into paragraphs. They choose adventurous vocabulary and a range of sentence structures to give variety to their writing.
- Teachers in key stage 1 and lower key stage 2 also challenge and support the most able pupils, though not as consistently well. For example, the few pupils currently in Year 1 who exceeded the early learning goals in writing in Reception Year are not writing at length often enough to help them build rapidly on their previous achievement. Year 3 and Year 4 pupils are not as well challenged in their mathematics as pupils in Years 5 and 6.
- Leaders and teachers have planned a broad, balanced and stimulating curriculum. Pupils complete work in every national curriculum subject. Much of this work challenges pupils. Teaching and outcomes in design and technology are especially strong; pupils enjoy designing, making and showcasing their work, which adorns the shared spaces of the building. Occasionally, work in a range of subjects does not stretch pupils enough. A few of the worksheets teachers provide prevent pupils deepening their understanding.
- The teaching of phonics in the early years and Year 1 is effective, so nearly all pupils meet the expected standard by the time they enter Year 2. Pupils continue to develop fluency and understanding so that standards by the end of key stage 1 and key stage 2 are above average. Pupils in Year 6 last year made strong progress in reading, with all pupils reaching the new, more challenging expected standard. The proportion of pupils reaching the higher standard was also above the unvalidated national average. Pupils who struggle with their reading are well supported and know how to work out unknown words.

- Disadvantaged pupils make progress in line with other pupils. There is little difference between the achievement of disadvantaged pupils in the school and that of other pupils nationally. Leaders and teachers have identified those few disadvantaged pupils who are not catching up. Precise goals are set for these pupils, targeted interventions are in place, and checks on their progress made regularly.
- Leaders and teachers know where each pupil is up to in their learning, but do not analyse assessment information well enough to identify in which years and subjects groups of pupils are doing well and less well.
- Children in the early years enjoy playing and exploring together and generally sustain interest in their activities. Adults' effective interactions with children, and their questioning of children, result in good learning. However, some aspects of teaching in the early years need improvement. The outdoor provision is under-developed. The activities provided cover too few aspects of learning and this limits children's choices. Some of the activities children choose for themselves when they are working indoors do not challenge them enough. This particularly impacts on the progress of the most able children.

Next steps for the school

Leaders and those responsible for governance should ensure that:

- teachers support and challenge the most able pupils consistently well in all classes and in a wide range of subjects
- provision in the early years, especially outdoors, makes suitable demands on children according to their abilities
- they analyse assessment information more thoroughly and use it to iron out any inconsistencies in teaching
- school improvement plans contain precise targets and milestones so that governors can use these to hold leaders to account more tenaciously for the difference leaders' actions make to pupils' outcomes.

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

Yours sincerely

Philip Riozzi
Her Majesty's Inspector

Information about the inspection

I came to your school with a few lines of enquiry. I wanted to find out what progress children in the early years make. I also wanted to know how well you had got to grips with teaching the new curriculum and whether it is challenging the most able pupils and meeting the needs of disadvantaged pupils. I was interested to find out the extent to which you actively promote the spiritual, moral, social and cultural development of pupils and prepare them for life in modern Britain.

We visited all classes at least once together and looked in pupils' workbooks. I questioned pupils about what it is like to be a pupil at the school. I observed pupils as they moved around the school, in the hall at lunchtime, and in the playground. We had several discussions together and I met with teachers, all of whom have leadership responsibilities. I met with four governors. I looked at a range of documents, including those relating to safeguarding, and the school improvement plan. I carefully considered the school's information about pupils' attainment and progress. I analysed 14 responses to the staff questionnaire, 49 responses to the pupil survey and 48 responses to the online questionnaire for parents.