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Miss Helen Metcalf
Headteacher
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Dear Miss Metcalf

Short inspection of Brackenhill Primary School

Following my visit to the school on 1 May 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 October 2014.

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.

Your inspirational leadership has led to significant improvement since the last inspection. You are uncompromising in your vision and determined to make sure that all pupils, irrespective of their background, culture or special educational need, make the best progress they can. Your school's record of strong progress has seen you now placed in the top 2% of schools in the country. This, however, has not lessened your desire for further improvement. You set high expectations and, ably supported by your deputy, have developed a team who are committed to reaching them. Skilfully, you have coached and developed teachers at various stages of their careers and managed challenging staffing absence while constantly seeking further improvement. You work effectively in partnership, sharing your expertise to rapidly improve other local schools while ensuring that good practice is embedded at Brackenhill.

Relationships between staff and pupils are respectful and friendly. Staff know pupils well and interact with them appropriately to make pupils feel valued. Behaviour in

lessons and around school, including at playtimes, is excellent. The school is calm and purposeful. Parents and carers are very complimentary about your school and appreciate everything that the school does for their children and their families. Parents particularly praise the school's inclusive nature, including the work of the special educational needs coordinator. One parent commented that the school had provided the 'chance for their child to succeed where other schools have not'. Another was enthusiastic to tell me that they are 'delighted with the social, emotional and educational progress their child is making'.

Your commitment to improving teaching has been relentless and your investment in middle leaders is now paying dividends. They are knowledgeable about their responsibility areas and show demonstrable impact since they started in post. Middle leaders monitor effectively and are aware of the strengths and areas for improvement in their subjects. They introduce new strategies to ensure that teachers are meeting the needs of all pupils. These include reading strategies and improvements to the teaching of mathematics. As a result of their professional development, middle leaders contribute very well to checking on the effectiveness of their actions. While pupils' achievement in reading and mathematics continues to improve, leaders are keen to develop it even further.

Teaching is strong and pupils' books show that, over time, pupils make excellent progress. Teachers use their extensive subject knowledge to deepen pupils' understanding through precise and tailored questions. Teachers use assessment information effectively to deliver well-planned lessons that challenge all pupils. Pupils enjoy coming to school and like their teachers. Pupils know that they will help them to understand things.

At the last inspection, inspectors challenged the school to improve the quality of teaching in the Nursery and Reception Years, to ensure that more children entered Year 1 having achieved a good level of development. Early years provision has improved significantly and outcomes have increased year on year. Staff are knowledgeable about their children and provide stimulating areas of provision in which children can develop a variety of skills. Opportunities for reading, writing and mathematics are evident in all areas of provision and topics inspire boys to apply these skills. Consequently, previous differences between the achievement of boys and girls in the early years are diminishing. More children enter Year 1 having attained a good level of development.

Governance at the school is strong. Governors visit school regularly. They offer support where appropriate and they have an excellent understanding about the school's performance. Governors use their expertise effectively. They ask challenging questions to ensure that the school directs resources, including pupil premium and sport funding, effectively to secure further improvement.

Safeguarding is effective.

There is an established culture of safeguarding at the school and there is a clear ethos that everybody is responsible for safeguarding. The leadership team has

ensured that all safeguarding arrangements are fit for purpose and that records are detailed and of high quality. Leaders have ensured that all members of staff and governors are regularly trained in different aspects of safeguarding. Leaders and governors ensure that checks on visitors and staff are carried out before they enter or join the school.

You know the families of pupils who attend the school very well and are vigilant about their welfare, especially any whose circumstances make them vulnerable. The school is particularly strong in supporting families when they are in need or crisis. You work closely with local agencies to ensure that pupils and parents receive the care and support they need. Attendance of pupils is regularly analysed and checks are made to ensure that all pupils are safe. However, attendance is lower than the national average. Continuing to develop strategies to improve attendance should remain a priority.

Pupils say they feel safe in school and parents agree. Pupils say that bullying is rare but are confident that, if it happens, an adult would stop it immediately. Pupils are aware of how to stay safe online.

Inspection findings

- During the inspection, I looked at whether middle-ability pupils were appropriately challenged in reading so that a larger proportion attained higher standards at the end of key stage 2. This is because, while their progress last year was strong, it was not as strong as other ability groups. Reading throughout key stage 2 is engaging and challenging. Teachers ask excellent questions to deepen pupils' understanding and assess their learning. The implementation of a new reading strategy has been highly effective. It ensures that pupils are being challenged to develop higher-order reading skills such as inference and retrieval. High-quality texts are used to inspire and motivate. Middle-ability pupils work excellently, both in groups and independently, to answer increasingly complex problems. Pupils' books show excellent progress since the start of the year. As a result, more middle prior attaining pupils are on track to achieve higher standards.
- I also investigated how effective the teaching of reading and mathematics is for girls throughout key stage 2. Even though the progress of girls in 2017 was above average, it was slower than that of the boys. Inspection evidence shows that girls are currently making strong progress throughout key stage 2 in reading. This is reflected in their books and in lessons. Girls read books that are interesting and challenging. The new reading strategy has had a positive effect on their progress. Reading lessons allow girls to sit together so that targeted questions can be asked to secure their understanding. Although pupils' books and assessment data show that girls are making excellent progress, the school acknowledges that opportunities for girls to apply their understanding of higher-order reading skills need embedding further in order to ensure that more achieve the high standard at the end of key stage 2.
- In mathematics, girls' skills are developed well to ensure that they make accelerated progress. Girls use concrete and pictorial resources to ensure that

they fully understand a concept before representing this in number form. Pupils' books show that girls have improved their understanding significantly since the start of the year and, consequently, more girls are on track to achieve the expected and higher standards.

- Another line of enquiry was to establish how effective provision is for boys in key stage 1. This is because the standards reached by boys at the end of Year 2 in 2017 lagged considerably behind that of the girls. This was already an area that the school had started to address and clearly pinpointed on their school development plan. Provision for boys in reading currently in key stage 1 is strong and they are making excellent progress. Pupils' books show that new initiatives such as 'The Comprehension Crew' are inspiring and motivating boys to develop the reading skills required to attain as well as girls.
- In writing, boys are also now making accelerated progress. This is because they are inspired and motivated to write about real-life experiences, dragons and castles. Progress since the start of the year, especially in grammar and punctuation, has been excellent.
- In mathematics, boys are well challenged and teachers deploy staff effectively to work with groups. Pupils who have special educational needs (SEN) and/or disabilities and lower-attaining boys make excellent progress from their starting points. Teachers ensure that there are a range of resources available for boys to use so they can develop a full understanding. While problem-solving and reasoning are evident in boys' books, leaders acknowledge that opportunities for these are not always shown quickly enough for them to be challenged to develop higher-order skills.
- The early years is now a strength of the school. Significant improvement means that provision now fully meets the needs of all children. This improvement is the result of the knowledgeable and passionate early years team whose dedication to providing the best learning experiences clearly shines through. Opportunities for all children to develop as writers and mathematicians are embedded in all provision areas. Adults make the best use of the outdoor space to ensure that boys are fully engaged in meaningful learning opportunities. They challenge children's thinking with careful questioning and enter into play to extend their understanding. Topics are linked to interests and real-life experiences which provide children with contexts to apply their skills. Consequently, a higher proportion of children now enter Year 1 having attained a good level of development. More boys are attaining the early learning goals, particularly in writing and mathematics.

Next steps for the school

Leaders and those responsible for governance should ensure that:

- teachers continue to provide opportunities for girls to further embed their understanding of high-level reading skills so that more achieve the high standard at the end of key stage 2
- teachers move pupils, especially boys, onto more challenging reasoning problems

sooner, throughout school

- strategies to improve attendance are developed so that attendance is at least in line with the national average.

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

Simon McCarthy
Ofsted Inspector

Information about the inspection

During the inspection, I met with you and your leadership team, 11 parents, five members of the governing body, including the chair, and one local authority school improvement lead. I met with the school's leaders for special educational needs, mathematics and English and early years and key stage 2. I talked with small groups of pupils during lessons and informally during lunchtime. Along with you, I visited classes to observe teaching and learning across the school and I scrutinised the work in pupils' books. I listened to 12 pupils read individually.

I examined a range of documentation, including that relating to attendance and safeguarding. I took account of the minutes of the governing body meetings, the school's evaluation of how well it is doing, improvement priorities, assessment information and the pupil premium action plan. I reviewed the school's website. I considered the responses from parents to Ofsted's online questionnaire, Parent View. I also considered the responses to Ofsted's questionnaires for staff and pupils.