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Mrs Deborah Brown
Headteacher
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Dear Mrs Brown

Short inspection of Buckton Vale Primary School

Following my visit to the school on 24 July 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 June 2014.

This school continues to be good.

The leadership team has maintained the good quality of education in the school since the last inspection. Following your appointment as headteacher in 2017, you have wasted no time in raising standards in the school. You have a clear vision for the school and want pupils to achieve their full potential. You, your governors and senior leaders have created a culture of high expectations, which all staff and pupils share.

You and your recently appointed deputy headteacher work very well as a team. You have a clear grasp of what is working well and those areas that need to improve further. You and your leaders have taken decisive actions to ensure that pupils make good progress in their learning. Children get off to a strong start in the Reception class. Most pupils leave the school having attained above the national averages in reading, writing and mathematics in key stage 2.

Buckton Vale Primary School has a strong sense of community. The school's values encourage every child to flourish. Pupils are happy and enjoy coming to school. I found pupils to be polite and welcoming. They show positive attitudes to learning in lessons and take pride in their work. The vast majority of parents and carers who spoke to me, and those who completed Ofsted's online questionnaire, were very positive about the school. A typical comment was: 'This is a lovely school. Teachers are very caring and my child is so happy.' Another parent said: 'The staff are

wonderful and encourage the children to excel.' The overwhelming majority of parents said that they would recommend the school to others. Staff feel motivated and supported. They have high expectations of pupils. Teachers use assessment information well to plan for pupils' needs in each lesson. Middle leaders have a good understanding of the strengths in their subjects. They check effectively on the quality of teaching and the progress pupils are making. Leaders work with the local authority and with schools in the Mossley and Carrbrook Partnership to check that assessments of pupils' work are accurate.

The membership of the governing body has changed significantly since the last inspection in June 2014. Governors are passionate about the school and have a broad range of skills and experience. They share your ambition for the school to improve further. One governor commented: 'We want pupils to achieve to the best of their ability.' Governors know the school well. They use the information gathered on school visits to challenge and support leaders effectively. You welcome the advice and support from your school improvement adviser.

At the previous inspection, the inspector asked leaders to ensure that pupils made better progress in mathematics. You have developed well-thought-out plans to address this. For example, leaders have revised the curriculum and purchased more practical equipment. This has given pupils improved strategies to develop their mathematical understanding. You have provided effective training for teachers that has had a positive impact on pupils' problem-solving skills. Pupils' assessment information and their books show that they are now making good progress in mathematics.

Another area for development from the previous inspection was to ensure that all pupils, including the most able pupils, are challenged. You have strengthened teachers' skills in questioning to move pupils' learning on. Pupils who I spoke to in lessons said that they feel challenged in their learning. The school's most recent information on pupils' progress in key stage 2 suggests that more pupils are beginning to achieve at a higher standard in reading, writing and mathematics. However, you are aware that there is still work to do to ensure that the most able pupils in all classes are challenged further.

Safeguarding is effective.

There is a strong safeguarding culture at the school. Safeguarding arrangements are fit for purpose. Records are detailed and of high quality. Leaders and the school business manager ensure that all checks are in place before adults start working at the school. Leaders and governors receive regular training. Staff know what actions to take if they have any concerns about a pupil's welfare or safety. Referrals are made in a timely manner and concerns followed up appropriately. Leaders work with outside agencies to ensure that pupils and parents are well supported.

Pupils said that they feel safe in school and that they know who to go to if they have a concern. They said that bullying rarely happens in school and, when it does, staff are good at dealing with it. Parents agreed that their children are safe.

Inspection findings

- One of the key lines of enquiry for this inspection related to the progress of pupils, including disadvantaged pupils, in writing in key stage 1. You were concerned that results at the end of Year 2 in 2016 and 2017 were below the national averages for pupils. You improved teaching to address this. For example, teachers provide many opportunities for pupils to develop their vocabulary and spelling. A focus on pupils' handwriting and presentation skills is having a positive impact on their writing outcomes. Teachers use 'hooks' to capture pupils' imagination and provide them with the opportunity to write at length. Leaders use the pupil premium funding more effectively to enable disadvantaged pupils to receive additional support for their learning. Current in-school assessment information, coupled with a scrutiny of pupils' work, shows that pupils are making better progress. However, all pupils need to improve standards in writing by the end of Year 2.
- Pupils did not make rapid enough progress in reading at the end of key stage 2 in 2017. You introduced a range of effective strategies to improve pupils' progress. For example, guided reading sessions provide pupils with targeted activities that make them think harder and help them to improve their comprehension skills. Older pupils in Year 6 enjoy reading to younger pupils. You have invested in high-quality books for the school library, to encourage pupils to read texts which challenge them more to improve their vocabulary and develop a love of reading. Pupils who read to me were able to use their phonics knowledge well to read unfamiliar words. Inspection evidence shows that attainment and progress have improved.
- Pupils' overall attendance is above the national average. However, the attendance of disadvantaged pupils was lower than that of other pupils in 2016 and 2017. You and your leaders know these pupils well and have a clear understanding of the barriers to learning that they face. Leaders and the attendance officer rigorously follow up pupils' absences with parents and use a range of rewards to encourage pupils to come to school. The impact of these initiatives is that the attendance of disadvantaged pupils has increased.
- You and your leaders have adapted and improved the curriculum so that it more closely matches the needs of pupils. The curriculum is broad and balanced. There are a number of good opportunities to extend learning, including trips and visits that help pupils to learn about the world around them. Leaders provide a wide selection of extra-curricular activities such as multi-sports, textiles, drumming and gardening. Pupils appreciate the opportunities to take on leadership roles, such as sports leaders and peer mediators who support younger pupils.
- My final line of enquiry was about how well leaders ensure that the most able pupils make rapid progress. This was identified as an area for development in the previous inspection report. In 2016 and 2017, the proportion of pupils who

attained greater depth in reading, writing and mathematics at the end of key stage 1 was below the national average. You have introduced a whole-school focus on challenging all pupils, which is bearing fruit. For example, pupils are able to choose activities that become increasingly difficult. They are keen to achieve at the highest level of 'gold'. Inspection evidence indicates that most of the activities set by teachers are closely matched to the ability of pupils, including the most able. However, the most able pupils need to be challenged more so that they can achieve greater depth in reading, writing and mathematics.

Next steps for the school

Leaders and those responsible for governance should ensure that:

- the standards that pupils reach in writing at the end of Year 2 continue to improve
- the most able pupils in all year groups are suitably challenged to enable a higher proportion of them to achieve more than the expected standard in reading, writing and mathematics.

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

Yours sincerely

Ahmed Marikar
Her Majesty's Inspector

Information about the inspection

During this inspection, I met with you, the deputy headteacher, other senior leaders, middle leaders and five governors. I held a telephone conversation with your school improvement adviser. I met with eight pupils from key stage 2 and spoke informally with others during breaktimes. I visited a number of classes where I observed teaching and learning, looked at pupils' work and spoke with pupils. I also heard pupils read. I spoke with parents as they dropped their children off at school. I took account of 82 responses to Parent View, the Ofsted online questionnaire, including 81 free-text responses. I also considered the views of 25 staff and 113 pupils through Ofsted's online questionnaires. I looked at a range of documentation, including the school's self-evaluation and information about pupils' attainment and progress. I also evaluated safeguarding procedures, including policies to keep children safe, records of training, safeguarding checks and attendance information. I undertook a review of the school's website.