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Mr Daniel Hargreaves
Headteacher
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Dear Mr Hargreaves

Short inspection of Summerseat Methodist Primary School

Following my visit to the school on 10 January 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 March 2014.

Based on the evidence gathered during this short inspection, I have identified some priorities for improvement which I advise the school to address. In light of these priorities, the school's next inspection will be a full section 5 inspection. **There is no change to the school's current overall effectiveness grade of good as a result of this inspection.**

Leaders, staff and governors have kept and further developed the welcoming and warm community feel to the school. The relationships between staff, pupils and their families are strong. The school feels purposeful and calm. Pupils are polite and well-mannered. They said that they enjoy lessons and appreciate the support for their learning that teachers provide. Pupils value the variety of extra-curricular activities, including trips, especially the residential visit for Years 5 and 6, and the various sports clubs. Those who completed the pupil survey were very positive about the school, with almost all saying they would recommend their school to a friend.

You and the staff team have largely taken effective action to address the areas for improvement identified at the last inspection. Inspectors asked you to ensure that pupils know how to behave in class. During my inspection, pupils' behaviour in classrooms and around the premises was consistently positive. They spoke confidently with me when sharing their views and opinions of school life. Pupils are proud of their school, recognising the positive changes made by leaders and staff to their management of behaviour.

Previously, inspectors asked leaders to ensure that pupils have an improved understanding of the culturally diverse nature of British society. This has been achieved. For example, pupils now have a greater understanding of equality and diversity. Pupils greatly value visits to the school from members of different faiths. Pupils learn the importance of caring for others, for example through raising funds for a charity to support the education of a child in Uganda.

You and the deputy headteacher know the school well. You have an accurate understanding of what the school does successfully and where further work is required. Your actions have resulted in much improvement in the quality of teaching and learning. National assessments of pupils' reading at the school in 2018 show a marked improvement in pupils' attainment. The standards attained by pupils in mathematics rose to above the national average.

However, in this inspection I found that pupils' attainment and progress in writing remain an issue for the school. Younger pupils are not developing their early reading skills strongly enough. Some assessments of children's achievement in the early years are inaccurate. The roles of subject leaders across the wider curriculum are underdeveloped. Senior leaders have identified these issues and are taking a range of actions in response, but it is too soon to see the full impact of their work.

Parents and carers said that the school cares for their children and develops them academically. Typical parental comments were, 'The school encourages positive relationships and develops children's confidence' and 'The new leadership team has tackled difficult problems regarding the quality of teaching and learning and now has effective teaching.' However, some parents said that their children could make better progress.

Safeguarding is effective.

There is a strong culture of safeguarding in the school. Safeguarding practice and procedures are fit for purpose. Leaders and governors fulfil statutory requirements when appointing new members of staff. Leaders are tenacious in their work to protect vulnerable pupils. Parents and pupils said that the school is a safe place.

Leaders, including governors, ensure that staff receive high-quality training and appropriate updates about safeguarding throughout the year. As a result, staff know how to recognise the signs and symptoms of abuse. Staff are very clear about the school's procedures for reporting and recording any concerns they may have about the safety and well-being of pupils.

Staff teach pupils how to keep themselves safe. Leaders have implemented clear programmes to teach pupils about personal and internet safety. As a result, pupils understand the dangers associated with internet use and how to report concerns to staff.

Inspection findings

- My first line of enquiry was to evaluate what the school has done to improve pupils' writing. You and the leadership team have given a strong profile to the grammar and punctuation aspects of writing. A range of training for teachers has resulted in a consistent, whole-school approach to the teaching of writing. Older pupils are beginning to use high-quality texts, investigate grammar and punctuation techniques, and apply their learning to their own writing with confidence. For example, they understand the purpose and audience for their writing and use words thoughtfully to create atmosphere and interest. They are writing at greater length with confidence.
- However, some pupils' writing in the early years and key stage 1 is below where the school expects them to be for their age. Some pupils do not apply their knowledge of phonics (letters and the sounds they represent) consistently when spelling words in their writing or lack confidence when writing independently. Inaccuracies in the assessment of children's achievement in the early years mean that some planned learning activities are weakly matched to children's needs.
- My second line of enquiry was to evaluate the effectiveness of leaders' actions to improve the teaching of phonics for younger pupils. Pupils' skills in reading in key stage 1 are improving but some find their books too difficult; they are unable to read successfully because their knowledge of phonics is patchy. In the early years, some children do not have the necessary knowledge of phonics with which to identify real, versus 'alien', words. In contrast, older pupils in the school read with confidence, as they have benefited from the strongly improved quality of teaching.
- Finally, I considered how well leaders have developed the wider curriculum. Leaders have improved the content of all subjects taught at the school. However, middle leaders do not review the quality of subjects beyond mathematics and English in enough depth to make certain that teaching and learning are as good as they might be.

Next steps for the school

Leaders and those responsible for governance should ensure that:

- they improve pupils' attainment and progress, by:
 - refining the quality of teaching and learning of phonics for younger pupils, including sharpening the accuracy of assessments made by staff
 - developing the confidence and skills of children to write independently of staff in the early years
 - ensuring that pupils can apply their understanding of phonics consistently in their spelling
- making sure that subject leaders know and act on information about how well children are learning in their respective subjects.

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

Yours sincerely

Ian Shackleton
Ofsted Inspector

Information about the inspection

During the inspection I met with you, staff and members of the governing body. I spoke with a representative of the local authority and a representative from the local Methodist circuit.

You and I observed teaching and learning together in all four classes. We scrutinised examples of pupils' writing from across the school. I examined and discussed with you a range of documents, including those relating to safeguarding. I looked at the school's self-evaluation, improvement priorities and information from staff's assessments of pupils' achievement.

I spoke with pupils in Years 1, 2, 5 and 6 about their reading and listened to them read. In addition, I spoke informally with pupils in the classrooms and at lunchtime to seek their views of the school. I considered the views expressed by parents who gathered in the playground before the start of the school day. I reviewed 26 responses to Ofsted's online survey, Parent View. I also considered the three responses to Ofsted's staff questionnaire and 26 responses to Ofsted's pupil survey.