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Mrs Jennifer Rackstraw and Ms Louise Moore
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Dear Mrs Rackstraw and Ms Moore

Short inspection of Buxworth Primary School

Following my visit to the school on 21 February 2017, 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 2012.

This school continues to be good.

The leadership team has maintained the good quality of education in the school since the last inspection. As joint headteachers you work very well together, leading the school as well as undertaking a teaching role alongside your staff. You are improving Buxworth Primary by making clear your insistence on high expectations for every pupil and ensuring that the quality of teaching is improving.

The school is a friendly, happy place where pupils enjoy coming to learn. Its motto, 'building tomorrow together', captures the aspiration for pupils' potential and emphasises the importance for everyone to cooperate and help each other. These values are reflected clearly in pupils' behaviour and attitudes. Classrooms are purposeful, positive learning environments where pupils work together very well and assist each other. They speak politely, are respectful to adults, follow instructions and work hard. Pupils can explain clearly what they are learning, and persist well when work is particularly difficult. Those I met told me that they felt very well cared for and that work was both interesting and challenging for them. Pupils explained how staff help those who need to catch up and how teachers give the most able pupils work that is more difficult in order to make them think hard. They believe that it is important to follow the school rules and to be always respectful of others.

You are challenging all staff to work consistently effectively together so that there will be no teaching which is less than good. Staff who responded to Ofsted's questionnaire gave unanimously positive responses to all questions. As one explained: 'I am very proud to work at Buxworth Primary School. Every child is well known to all staff and cared for. Their welfare and progress is paramount to all staff.' You are providing teachers with an effective range of professional development opportunities to sharpen their skills. You are providing good support to any member of staff who needs assistance, or is less confident, to improve.

The governing body is very committed to the school and members are helping you drive forward the improvements you are making. Governors do this effectively and perform their strategic role with efficiency. This is because you supply them with a good level of information about the progress of different cohorts and groups of pupils in a range of subjects. This enables them to challenge you if any pupils are not making sufficient gains.

Around two thirds of parents submitted responses to Parent View. These were overwhelmingly positive, with a very large majority believing that you both lead and manage the school well. Ninety-eight per cent of them say that they would recommend the school to others.

You have written a detailed self-evaluation of the many things the school does well, including how you have effectively addressed the areas inspectors asked leaders to improve at the last inspection. You are, however, aware that there are certain aspects of your school's provision which need to be improved further. You have correctly identified these areas through the wide and regular range of monitoring you undertake. Some of this has been done with useful support from members of the local authority who you have used wisely to check that your judgements are correct. Monitoring of lessons and of pupils' work has shown that while progress of pupils is good overall it is not sufficiently rapid in writing. Teachers do not give pupils sufficient opportunities to write longer pieces, including in different subjects. In addition, not all teachers insist that pupils correct their basic spelling and punctuation errors, nor make clear to pupils that they must write neatly and legibly. Furthermore, standards in mathematics are not as high as they could be. Although pupils have secure skills in number and calculation, teachers do not consistently give pupils enough time to apply these skills through open-ended investigations and word-based problems.

Safeguarding is effective.

Your staff have a clear understanding of their responsibility to report to you immediately any concerns that they have about a pupil's safety. They have been trained well in safeguarding, including in areas such as extremism. You have ensured that all safeguarding arrangements are fit for purpose. Records are appropriately detailed and of high quality. They show that you make brisk referrals to external agencies, such as social care, where this is required. You are clear of the need to escalate your concerns if you do not believe agencies are responding with sufficient urgency.

Pupils who I met during my visit told me that they feel safe in school. They told me how both bullying and name-calling are rare because pupils get on well together. When they do occur, they can rely on staff to quickly and effectively deal with matters. They also explained how staff teach them to be aware of, and protect themselves against, a variety of risks.

Inspection findings

- You have effectively addressed the areas for improvement identified at the last inspection. Teachers now check pupils' progress regularly when they are completing independent work. In addition, you are ensuring that you swiftly incorporate into action plans any areas that, through your monitoring work, you judge to require attention.
- Children's levels of attainment on entry to the early years vary considerably from year to year, due to the small size of cohorts. Nevertheless, they make good progress from their starting points. Children's skills in writing in the early years are improving due to more opportunities to write, together with teaching which is more precisely matched to their needs. The proportion of children currently on track to attain a good level of development is above the national average.
- Pupils' outcomes at the end of key stage 2 fell in 2016, and progress was significantly below the national average in all subjects. This was because this cohort had received some weaker teaching earlier in key stage 2 which meant that there were gaps in their skills and knowledge. You explain that in hindsight, teachers' assessment of writing for these pupils was unduly harsh. You have now modified your approach and have ensured that, through additional training, assessment systems are more balanced and precise.
- You also described to me how, during the period immediately before pupils sat their tests, significant external circumstances affected the well-being and performance of a number of pupils. I studied written work from this cohort to judge their gains over time. This showed that their progress and skills were stronger than those indicated by actual test scores.
- School information shows that around eight in 10 current pupils are making at least the progress expected of them in English and mathematics, with around 30%–50% making more than this. Pupils' work confirms that, overall, they are making good progress in both English and mathematics as well as in other subjects.
- You use the pupil premium effectively to ensure that the small number of pupils who are disadvantaged make good progress and attain well compared with others nationally.
- While pupils are able to calculate and use numbers effectively, they do not make faster progress because teachers do not give them enough opportunities to apply what they know. As a result, pupils cannot demonstrate confidently, in a written way, their mathematical reasoning.

- Pupils' writing skills are improving, with them using adventurous vocabulary and good skills in grammar. However, they do not make substantial progress because they lack sufficient stamina to write longer pieces of work.
- Too much of the work that I saw during my inspection showed that pupils often continue to make the same basic errors in punctuation and spelling. This is because teachers do not consistently make pupils aware of them, nor insist that pupils correct them quickly. In addition, while pupils complete most of their work neatly, this is not always the case. I noted repeated instances where teachers had not ensured that pupils formed their letters properly or with sufficient care.
- Attendance, which while being above the national average last year overall, fell for both girls and those pupils who were classified as requiring support for their special educational needs and/or disabilities. The attendance of these groups has now risen and is now above the national average.

Next steps for the school

Leaders and those responsible for governance should ensure that:

- pupils receive regular opportunities to write at length across the curriculum and to apply their mathematical skills in order to solve, in writing, word-based problems
- all teachers insist that pupils correct their basic spelling and punctuation problems and form their letters neatly when they write.

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

Yours sincerely

Roary Pownall
Her Majesty's Inspector

Information about the inspection

During the inspection, I met you both and shared my key lines of enquiry. I also met with members of the governing body and the teacher for the early years and held a telephone conversation with the school's local authority adviser. I considered the responses of parents from Ofsted's online survey, Parent View, and the school's most recent questionnaire to parents. I visited all classes in the school, spending a short time in each. I looked at a wide selection of pupils' work. I viewed a range of documents including leaders' evaluation of the school's current performance and its plans for further improvement, information on how the pupil premium is spent and

a number of policy documents, including those for child protection and special educational needs. I examined the school's website to check that it meets requirements on the publication of specified information. I observed pupils' behaviour in lessons and met with a group of them at breaktime. I analysed the responses of both pupils and staff to Ofsted's questionnaires. I visited the school's breakfast club to check that pupils were safe, happy and well looked after.