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Miss Sarah Leather
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Dear Miss Leather

Short inspection of Featherstone Purston Infant School

Following my visit to the school on 27 June 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 May 2013.

This school continues to be good.

The leadership team has maintained the good quality of education in the school since the last inspection. You, as headteacher, supported effectively by staff and governors, have taken prompt and effective action to address the shortcomings of the outcomes for pupils in the tests and assessments in 2016. Pupils have made good progress in their learning this year and an increasing number are working at greater depth, particularly in reading and mathematics. This marked improvement is due entirely to your precise and accurate analysis of what needed to happen urgently to secure good outcomes for pupils and checking that the actions you took were effective. Although only taking up your post as headteacher in September 2016, you took decisive action to improve teaching quickly. You established a strong leadership team to support you in monitoring the performance of pupils and teachers more closely. Your clear understanding of the needs of the school and the community it serves has been pivotal in the school's rapid improvement this year.

A very supportive and caring ethos permeates all that the school does. Pupils feel safe, secure and happy at school. Parents say that staff take good care of their children and accommodate their individual needs with kindness and sensitivity. Staff are very aware of the considerable challenges that some children and their families face in their lives. They work effectively with other agencies to safeguard pupils' well-being and personal development, as well as supporting their academic achievements. Pupils trust their teachers and other adults that work in the school. They know that teachers will help them if any issues arise at home or school. Parents are highly positive about all that the school

does to welcome children in the school and the support they receive to prepare them for the next stage of their education. The school is a calm, orderly place where pupils enjoy their learning and make good progress, irrespective of their starting points, which for many are very low. Children this year have attained good levels of development that are not significantly lower than is typical for their age. Pupils who are leaving the school at the end of Year 2 are working at levels close to those expected nationally in reading and mathematics. Outcomes in writing are lower, but not significantly so.

All staff and governors are highly committed to school improvement. Teamwork in the school is effective and improving strongly. Staff feel valued, enjoy working at the school and are proud to be there. They understand what leaders are working to achieve and fully support them in providing pupils with a good start to their education. Leaders have good capacity to improve the school further so that all pupils achieve their full potential. Governors share the staff's passion for pupils' success. They know the school well and have the skills to hold leaders to account for the school's performance in every respect.

As headteacher, you have an accurate understanding of the school's strengths and the areas that need further improvement. All leaders share your ambition to be the best school possible. You have established robust systems to identify quickly any pupils at risk of falling behind in their learning and check rigorously that any actions you take are effective. In the school's last inspection, leaders were asked to raise the challenge for the most able pupils. This is improving rapidly, particularly in the early years and Year 1. Faster progress is also evident in Year 2, but some pupils here are still catching up on their slower progress in the past when teaching was not as strong as it should have been. Teaching is now consistently of good quality and some is outstanding.

Another area for development from the previous inspection was to strengthen the monitoring of teaching so that there was greater emphasis on the impact of teaching on pupils' learning. The monitoring of teaching and learning is now robust and staff have good opportunities to undertake training to improve their skills further. For example, the teaching of reading is strong throughout the school and all children make rapid gains, despite their often very low starting points in the Nursery.

A further area for improvement was to make sure that the work pupils did was matched accurately to their needs. Your expectations of all pupils to achieve well are now consistently high. The information staff gather from assessments of pupils' progress is accurate and reliable. Teachers are using this information to inform their planning so that all pupils achieve their targets. While this reflects good improvement, there is still work to do to ensure that disadvantaged pupils move closer to achieving as well as other pupils nationally and that the most able disadvantaged pupils are challenged further. These pupils are making good progress, but still lag behind their classmates, particularly in Year 2.

An increasing number of pupils in the school have special educational needs and/or disabilities, often of a very complex nature. Many of these pupils are also disadvantaged; a few have poor attendance. Provision for these pupils, often personalised for their specific needs, is good. Regular reviews of pupils' progress ensure that teaching, including individual programmes of support, meets their needs effectively. However, despite the

school's best efforts, the low attendance of a few limits the progress they make.

Safeguarding is effective.

The leadership team ensures that all safeguarding arrangements are fit for purpose and that records are detailed and easily accessible. Leaders, including governors, regularly check that all staff and governors are suitably vetted in line with current legislation. Pupils' safety is of paramount importance to everyone at the school. The vigilance from all staff ensures that pupils' welfare and well-being are a high priority. Attendance is good for the vast majority of pupils; absences are followed up promptly, particularly in cases where pupils are known to be at risk. The learning mentor and designated staff ensure that referrals to outside agencies receive immediate attention so that pupils and their families receive the necessary support to help them progress successfully.

Leaders ensure that health and safety matters feature highly in routine checks and all staff have the requisite up-to-date training to carry out their duty of care for pupils effectively. They know to raise any concerns regarding the safety and well-being of any pupil promptly, in line with the school's policy and procedures. Staff have all undertaken training in every aspect of safeguarding, including radicalisation, extremism and the dangers posed by social media sites.

Pupils' knowledge and understanding of how to stay safe is developed effectively through activities such as road safety training and internet safety through assemblies and the curriculum. Pupils said that they feel safe at school and know how to stay safe at home and when out and about. A pupil explained that they had talked about the 'horrible fire where lots of people died', and that they have fire practices in school. Pupils trust their teachers to keep them safe. They said that there is no bullying in school and if it did happen, teachers would deal with it quickly. As one pupil explained, 'It is unkind to laugh at people and call them names. It might make them cry and be upset.'

Inspection findings

- The inspection focused on key lines of enquiry that we discussed at the start of the day. The first of these was checking if pupils had made good progress this year, particularly in mathematics, where pupils' performance in 2016 was lower than expected, and whether the performance of boys was as high as that of the girls. The school's current assessment data reflects good progress in reading, writing and mathematics. Overall outcomes this year, in reading, writing and mathematics, are considerably higher than in 2016. Outcomes are higher in reading and mathematics when compared with outcomes in writing. Pupils' performance in writing lags behind a little, because pupils, particularly the boys, find writing a challenge. Leaders are taking effective action to address this. Pupils in Year 1 are well placed to do well next year.
- I also looked in detail at the quality of teaching in the school and how this impacts on pupils' learning over time. Leaders have established robust systems for monitoring the performance of staff and pupils. The quality of teaching has improved rapidly and is now consistently good and some practice is outstanding. This has put the school in a good place to improve further. Staff are held to account effectively. They have clear targets and access to good training to help them achieve them. Leaders have an

accurate awareness of the strengths and weaknesses in the quality of teaching, learning and assessment across the school. Improvements in teaching are accelerating pupils' progress across all year groups, including in the early years.

- I worked with you to look closely at the school's assessment and tracking systems to ensure that all pupils had the opportunity to make good progress. You conduct robust pupil progress meetings with staff and check that teachers' planning is fit for purpose and the assessments they make regarding pupil progress are accurate and reliable. Governors check with you that pupils are on track to meet their targets. Extra support is arranged for those at risk of falling behind at any stage. These checks and measures are effective in helping almost all pupils make the best progress they can.
- You provide a wide range of effective support to help disadvantaged pupils make good progress in their learning. For example, the 'Early Birds' club for these pupils is proving effective in accelerating their progress. Those who attend this provision regularly benefit in their reading and other learning, and this is helping them move closer to the performance of pupils nationally. However, not all of those eligible attend regularly enough to benefit fully from this effective provision.
- Leaders monitor pupils' progress carefully and identify quickly those at risk of slipping behind their targets. A few face considerable barriers to learning and have poor attendance. Your aspirations for these pupils are high; the consistently good teaching is accelerating their progress rapidly. You provided information to show the good rates of progress of disadvantaged pupils, particularly in the early years and Year 1, where the improvements since the previous inspection have had significant impact. The work I saw in pupils' books showed that many are developing greater confidence in their learning. The difference between the progress of disadvantaged pupils and that of other pupils is diminishing. There is scope to challenge the most able disadvantaged pupils further.
- I looked at the teaching of reading because pupils' outcomes in reading in 2016, at the end of Year 2, were not as strong as in previous years. This was a cohort that had more boys than girls, and many of these boys were low-attaining when they entered Year 1. The teaching of phonics is very effective. Pupils in the Nursery have a good grounding in their basic reading skills and develop a love of reading through consistently good teaching. Pupils enjoy the challenge of matching letters to sounds and progress quickly to reading fluently. The greater focus this year on comprehension is proving effective in that an increasing number of pupils now have greater confidence in interpreting texts and applying a wider vocabulary in their writing. Teachers model good reading skills and probe pupils' precise understanding of words and texts. Pupils enjoy reading and talking about the characters and plots of stories they like.
- The teaching of mathematics is also systematic and effective in increasing pupils' confidence in number operations and problem solving. For example, I saw children in the early years count accurately, understanding 'more than', 'less than' and how to divide numbers up to 20 by half and quarters accurately. Pupils in Year 2 explored volume and capacity by assessing whether different-shaped containers held more or less water. While they make good progress against their low starting points, the lower-attaining pupils sometimes struggle to grasp concepts as quickly as they need to because they find it difficult to concentrate on too much information at any one time.
- The teaching of writing is improving strongly through more opportunities for pupils to

write in other subjects. However, because of their often very low starting points, too few achieve at greater depth at the end of Year 2. With this in mind staff in the early years plan interesting activities to inspire children to write. For example, children are encouraged to make shopping lists, to write stories and to devise menus for the 'pretend café'. A number of pupils, particularly lower-attaining boys, find writing a challenge but because they love talking about characters and story lines, they are now beginning to make more rapid progress.

- The attendance of most pupils is good. As it is an infant school, childhood illnesses, such as chickenpox, and sickness bugs are a constant hindrance. Leaders track attendance closely and challenge all unauthorised absences. Persistent absence is an issue, particularly among a few disadvantaged pupils, and this has a detrimental impact on the progress that these pupils make. Every effort is made to stress the importance of good attendance. It has improved this year and is now close to the national average.
- Pupils behave well and are keen to learn. Staff act as good role models and pupils learn from them, understanding well what is expected of them. Pupils are polite and friendly. Relationships in the school are warm, relaxed and respectful. Parents who presented their views during the inspection said that the school was a happy place which, as one said, is 'just what you hope for when children start school. My child has taken to school so well and it is good to know she is happy at school.' The school teaches children to be kind and respect others. Teachers say that behaviour is generally very good. A few pupils find it hard to manage their behaviour. Staff support any lapses effectively.

Next steps for the school

Leaders and those responsible for governance should ensure that:

- the progress of disadvantaged pupils, particularly the most able disadvantaged pupils, increases more rapidly to be in line with that of other pupils nationally
- all pupils achieve as well in their writing as they do in reading and mathematics
- leaders continue to promote good attendance, especially among the few who miss too much school
- leaders do more to encourage pupils eligible for the 'Early Birds' to attend regularly and do more to involve parents in supporting their children's learning

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

Yours sincerely

Rajinder Harrison
Ofsted Inspector

Information about the inspection

During the inspection I met with you and your deputy, the chair of the governing body and one other governor, and all staff. I also had a telephone conversation with your school improvement partner. I analysed a range of documentation, including information about pupils' achievement, the school improvement plan, and safeguarding checks, policies and procedures. We discussed your own evaluation of the school's effectiveness. I observed pupils around the school, as they came into school and in their classes. Together we visited all classes and some small-group work. In the classes, I observed teaching, looked at some pupils' books, spoke to pupils about their work and listened to some of them read. I also met with pupils to get their views of the school. I considered the views of the 22 staff who completed the Ofsted online staff survey. I took account of the 35 responses by parents to Ofsted's online questionnaire, Parent View, and the 34 text responses they submitted. I also spoke with a number of parents at the start of the school day.