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Lisa Matthews
Principal
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Dear Ms Matthews

Short inspection of Bamford Academy

Following my visit to the school on 12 September 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 October 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 became principal shortly after the previous inspection and since then you have successfully addressed the areas for improvement that inspectors identified at that time. When necessary, you have challenged teachers' underperformance and have introduced strategies to improve the quality of teaching. These include the appointment of a new subject leader for mathematics, who has provided coaching for teachers and revised the school's calculation policy; and extra training for staff in the early years to develop their effectiveness.

Because of your actions, evidence from pupils' work and from assessment information shows that most pupils across the school make good progress in mathematics now and that children in the early years make good progress from their starting points. However, you acknowledged during our joint observations that there was a lack of challenge seen in some classes, especially for a few of the most able. You also accepted that there were occasional instances where teachers lacked accuracy in their technical language.

You have improved the quality of the care you provide for pupils before and after school in your wrap-around-care clubs. You have made changes to staffing to bring

about a more structured experience for pupils, who now enjoy activities such as dodgeball and craft. Staff also provide them with breakfast before school.

I spoke with a group of pupils from Year 5 and Year 6 during the inspection. These pupils showed themselves to be polite and confident. They told me that they enjoy coming to school and that they feel safe because there are 'nice people here'. They find the adults in school friendly and trustworthy. They know they can speak to the school's counsellor or to their teacher if they have any concerns. They take part in a range of clubs, like football and drama, and enjoy educational visits, such as residential adventure trips. These activities contribute well to pupils' spiritual, moral social and cultural development. Pupils also said their teachers provide challenging work, and a typical comment was, 'They push us to do our best.'

You also promote pupils' appreciation of fundamental British values effectively. I met with members of staff who spoke knowledgeably about the programme of themed events and planned lessons in, for example, religious education that support this aspect of pupils' development.

The majority of parents are supportive of the school and its staff. Many of those who responded to Parent View, Ofsted's online survey, made positive comments about the school, typically describing it as having a 'fabulous community spirit' and being a 'lovely, warm, welcoming school'.

Governors are ambitious for the school and have an accurate picture of its strengths and areas to develop. They challenge you and your school leaders strongly, with minutes of meetings showing that they typically ask searching questions about the effectiveness of the education the school provides.

The school's external consultant has an accurate view of the strengths and areas for development of the school. He provides effective support by advising members of the governing body who are responsible for managing your performance.

Safeguarding is effective.

The leadership team has ensured that all safeguarding arrangements are fit for purpose and records are detailed and of high quality. You record concerns appropriately and you are prompt in following up issues with other agencies, such as social services. The school's record of checks on staff is compliant.

The school has a strong culture of safeguarding. Staff have received effective training and are knowledgeable about the signs of different types of abuse. Leaders have provided extra training about safeguarding issues that are specific to the local area, such as child sexual exploitation. Staff provide pupils with the knowledge they need to keep themselves safe in various situations. For example, pupils know how to stay safe online by not revealing personal information. They also develop road sense through programmes such as 'Bikeability', which improves their cycling skills.

Inspection findings

- I focused on a number of key lines of enquiry during the inspection, which I agreed with you at the beginning of the day. I have covered some aspects of these previously in this letter. They were related to safeguarding and to addressing the areas for improvement contained in the previous inspection report.
- One line of enquiry I followed concerned the progress of children in Reception, especially in reading and mathematics. Recent unvalidated assessment information and evidence from children's work indicate that the extra training you introduced to improve the quality of teaching in the early years has had a positive effect. The proportion of children reaching a good level of development, including in reading and writing, is above the most recent national average and is higher than in 2016.
- Another focus was the progress of pupils in reading, writing and mathematics in key stage 1. You correctly identified that results at the end of Year 2 in 2016 were well below the national averages for a number of groups. You made the improvement of teaching in key stage 1 a priority and introduced strategies such as peer coaching, which allows teachers to observe each other's work and share good practice. The effectiveness of your actions can be seen in the good progress that current pupils make and in the improved achievement in reading, in writing and in mathematics in the provisional Year 2 results for 2017. There is also clear improvement in the proportion of pupils achieving at greater depth in these subjects. We observed good behaviour and attitudes to learning in our short visits to classrooms, but you accepted that sometimes in mathematics there was a lack of effective match between the task and pupils' abilities.
- My next focus was the apparent decline in a small number of aspects of achievement in the unvalidated Year 6 test results for 2017, especially concerning mathematics. Although most measures showed that pupils achieved in line with or better than the national average in many respects, you were prompt to identify the main weakness and have made improvement in mathematical questioning a priority for the current school year. You have rearranged staffing to match teachers' skills to the appropriate year group. You anticipate that there will be no repeat of lower attainment among the current Year 6. Evidence from their work in Year 5 and from the school's own assessment information indicates that they currently make good progress.
- Finally, there were a few minor omissions from school's website. Leaders have undertaken to rectify matters as soon as possible.

Next steps for the school

Leaders and those responsible for governance should ensure that:

- they secure even better progress for pupils in mathematics in key stage 2 by developing strong mathematical questioning skills among teachers

- in mathematics, teachers provide a more consistent match between tasks and pupils' abilities, including challenge for the most able, and are accurate in their use of technical language
- the school's website is compliant and remains so.

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

Yours sincerely

Mark Quinn
Her Majesty's Inspector

Information about the inspection

I carried out short visits to the early years and all year groups in key stage 1 and key stage 2, which were joint activities with you. I scrutinised a range of documentation, including the school's self-evaluation summary, action plans for school improvement, records of incidents of bullying and misbehaviour, minutes of meetings of the governing body and records connected with the safeguarding of children. I held discussions with members of staff, governors and pupils. I had a discussion on the telephone with the external consultant you have commissioned. I analysed pupils' work and the school's own assessment information. I evaluated 76 responses received through Parent View, Ofsted's online survey. I also analysed 41 responses to the staff questionnaire. There were no other survey responses.