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Mrs Esther Bland
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Dear Mrs Bland

Short inspection of Mottram CofE Primary School

Following my visit to the school on 12 July 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 March 2014.

This school continues to be good.

The leadership team has maintained the good quality of education in the school since the last inspection.

You are driving improvements across every aspect of the school. Pupils' attainment is increasing and rates of achievement, year on year, are becoming much more consistent. You are determined that the school does all it can to ensure that pupils are healthy and happy. The school is a model of cohesion and integration. A pupil said, 'It's like one big family here', and when pupils work and play this is evidently true.

Providing a spiritual education is clearly a school priority. Pupils have very high moral standards. They are tolerant and respectful. Behaviour in classes and around school is very good. Pupils accept responsibility for their behaviour, and they know what is and what is not acceptable. Occasionally, when a pupil misbehaves you and your staff deal with this very well. The fundamental Christian belief of forgiveness is central to the school's behaviour management strategy, and pupils know that they will start afresh every day.

The school's ethos is most evident when pupils sing together. They sing their hearts out. Every pupil stands proud and gives their very best. Pupils and children of all ages mix, older ones reassuring and encouraging the youngest. Listening to the whole school sing together is a spiritually uplifting experience.

You and your staff strive to unlock the potential of every pupil. You never give up on a child and you are constantly looking for the key that will help pupils to develop into confident and caring young people who enjoy learning. In this quest, you have realised that many pupils need support to improve their mental health. The school's resolve to promote healthy bodies and healthy minds is beginning to benefit all pupils. They are developing qualities of resilience and determination. They are proud of their achievements and, through better understanding themselves, are becoming much more self-assured.

You have developed a highly beneficial collaboration between the two primary schools you lead, Mottram and Broadbottom. You have been able to develop leadership skills in other staff who willingly accept responsibility in your absence. Combined school training enables staff to discuss different ideas and to develop new strategies. Opportunities for teachers to compare pupils' work are easy to arrange and helpful to teachers in assessing pupils' work accurately. Mottram's strengthened leadership team and your excellent leadership have ensured that the school has improved considerably since its last inspection.

Your evaluation of how well the school is performing is accurate. You know precisely what next needs to be improved in your quest to provide an outstanding education for children in this community. You rightly point to some improvements needed in the teaching of mathematics. You are also aware that a greater proportion of your pupils should be able to achieve greater depth in understanding by the time they leave for secondary school. You and your staff have worked diligently to address all areas for improvement described at the conclusion of the last inspection. Pupils are a credit to the school. Their behaviour and attitudes are exemplary. Teaching assistants are now important members of the teaching staff, and all make very valuable contributions to pupils' learning and welfare.

The wider community is beginning to become aware of the improvements in Mottram. Consequently, numbers of pupils on your school roll are increasing. A large proportion of pupils joining the school beyond Reception have special educational needs and/or disabilities. Similarly, parents and carers of other pupils are attracted by the care given to all pupils, the strong family culture and the academic success that the school achieves. The vast majority of parents who made their views known to me are very supportive of your work and the work of all staff.

Safeguarding is effective.

The close bond between staff and pupils and the trust that pupils have in staff are the most important factors in ensuring that safeguarding is effective in this school. Pupils care deeply and look out for each other. Indications are that pupils trust staff implicitly and so would confidently confide in them if they had any concerns. Staff are well trained to recognise signs that may suggest that a pupil is suffering neglect or abuse. They can describe with confidence and accuracy procedures to follow if they have any concerns about a pupil. Pupils are taught how to stay safe in a variety of contexts, including while using social media or just out and about in their

community. Procedures to vet and recruit only suitable staff meet requirements. All other safeguarding procedures are fit for purpose and record-keeping is of a high quality.

Inspection findings

- The teaching of both reading and writing has been highly effective over recent years. There is a strong culture to promote reading throughout the school. Adults act as good role models, talking to pupils about books they enjoy. There are reading zones throughout the school where pupils can sit and read in comfort in a stimulating environment. Adults frequently listen to weak readers, giving them good guidance on how to improve. You have focused teachers' attention on improving the teaching of writing, and this has been very successful. Through good training, teachers understand how to develop pupils' skills in writing and they have high expectations of what pupils can achieve. Teachers ensure that pupils write in every lesson, sometimes at length. It is evident through looking at pupils' books that they take great pride in crafting good pieces of writing. The successful development of children's literacy skills starts early during their time in Reception. There is a systematic and consistent approach to the development of reading and writing throughout the school.
- You are beginning to improve the teaching of mathematics, using the same successful model that you used to improve English. Teachers are reviewing the strategies that they use with their pupils and developing a clear understanding of what works in Mottram. As a result, attainment in mathematics is rising. Pupils' skills in working with numbers are good. Whole-school days, focusing on investigating problems with a mathematical theme, do much to extend pupils' understanding. However, this aspect of pupils' mathematical development is not yet routine and so not as well developed as their arithmetical skills.
- You have skilfully managed improvements in the teaching of mathematics and English, while ensuring that pupils continue to achieve well in all other aspects of the curriculum. Pupils really enjoy science, and teachers take care to ensure that pupils develop very good scientific skills. Good-quality topic work helps pupils to understand aspects of history and geography. Standards of art are high and, of course, music is a considerable strength of the school.
- The recently published, but unvalidated, national test results confirm that the school is consolidating its strengths and improving areas which were weaker. Outcomes at the end of key stage 1 were particularly strong, and attainment at the end of key stage 2 was very good in English. The proportions of pupils attaining a greater depth of understanding are not as impressive as the proportion attaining the expected age-related standards. This is because teachers are not pushing the most able pupils to really excel.
- The care and attention that every teacher and teaching assistant gives to individual pupils, their skilled teaching and their high expectations ensure that all pupils learn well. This includes pupils who are disadvantaged or who have special educational needs and/or disabilities.
- Staff promote pupils' self-esteem and their personal development systematically.

Adults are constantly looking for opportunities to help individuals to grow in confidence and learn about themselves. These can sometimes be as simple as giving them a responsibility around school, or there might be an opportunity to help a pupil to learn how to analyse and express their own feelings. Staff are creative in the way in which they provide a wide range of learning activities and experiences. Sometimes, these include interesting classroom study topics or educational visits. Pupils have a good understanding of cultures and communities beyond their own direct experience.

Next steps for the school

- Leaders and those responsible for governance should ensure that they continue to improve pupils' achievement, in particular, the proportion of pupils that attain a greater depth of understanding, by making sure that teachers provide more opportunities for pupils to:
 - think deeply about what they are learning and to be able to discuss and write about their ideas
 - investigate and solve mathematical problems through reasoning and using their strong arithmetical skills.

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

Yours sincerely

Neil Mackenzie
Her Majesty's Inspector

Information about the inspection

During the inspection, I held meetings with you and the deputy headteacher. I met with three members of the governing body and spoke to a representative of the local authority and the diocese. I met with a group of teachers, teaching assistants and administrative staff. I met with seven parents. I spoke to groups of pupils during their breaktimes. School documents were scrutinised, including safeguarding checks, information about pupils' achievement, school reviews and improvement plans. I also visited classrooms with you and looked at pupils' work. I examined child protection information. I took account of the 52 responses to the online questionnaire, Parent View. I took account of responses from 15 staff to an inspection survey. I considered the views of 47 parents who texted me their comments and one parent who emailed their thoughts to me.