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Mrs Rachel Edwards
Headteacher
Meersbrook Bank Primary School
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Dear Mrs Edwards

Short inspection of Meersbrook Bank Primary School

Following my visit to the school on 9 March 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 January 2012.

This school continues to be good.

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

At the last inspection, you were asked to improve the teaching of writing. In response, you have ensured that staff have received focused training and opportunities to visit other schools to observe good practice. You have introduced thought-provoking themes that encourage pupils to write and have chosen high-quality texts to support their reading and writing. Consequently, in the majority of classes, pupils demonstrate stamina for writing and present their work well. The teaching of writing is particularly effective when pupils are responding creatively to their teachers' direction and secure subject knowledge. Pupils in key stage 2 are using imaginative vocabulary and language conventions relating to spelling, punctuation and grammar with confidence. In 2016, at the end of key stages 1 and 2, pupils' progress and attainment were above national averages in writing at the expected standard, but in key stage 1, insufficient proportions of pupils demonstrated writing in greater depth.

You were also charged to improve the quality of learning in reading and mathematics through improving feedback to pupils. You have successfully implemented a new policy that is being applied consistently by staff. In 2016, pupils made strong progress in reading, but slightly below average progress in mathematics. You have supported teachers to improve the teaching of mathematics. As a result, teachers are providing greater challenge to pupils to

develop their reasoning skills, but pupils are not consistently able to demonstrate their mastery of mathematics in order to achieve the highest standards of attainment.

The attainment and progress of current pupils in reading, writing and mathematics are good. The school's own assessment information shows that between 60% and 75% of each class are working within standards typically expected for their age. Between 20% and 30% of pupils have high attainment. Work in pupils' books provides convincing evidence of this.

Safeguarding is effective.

You and your governors have ensured that safeguarding policies have been updated in line with government guidance and that staff have been trained to identify signs and symptoms of harm or potential radicalisation. Record-keeping is detailed and shows effective work with other agencies. However, because of the challenges of the school site, some safety procedures could be even more effective. For example, leaders have not analysed the cause of some minor accidents or ensured all risk assessments reflect the specific needs of Meersbrook Bank School closely enough.

Inspection findings

- You and your governors demonstrate ambition and determination to further improve the quality of education provided at Meersbrook Bank School. Together with your staff, you are ensuring that pupils receive exciting and stimulating learning experiences. The quality of learning in science is a strength, with many planned opportunities for pupils to develop and apply their scientific skills to hands-on experiments. You have ensured that learning across all areas of the curriculum is effective and pupils are encouraged to develop their creativity through music and art. Pupils particularly enjoy learning Spanish.
- Mutual respect between pupils and staff is helping to secure studious and productive learning in most lessons. Pupils present their work with pride because of high expectations instilled by their teachers. Teachers' planning is effective in ensuring that pupils are working on tasks that are well-matched to their abilities, enabling most pupils to make secure progress as they move through school.
- Staff are enabling pupils to access an impressive range of extra-curricular clubs and activities. Pupils were positively wide-eyed as they described attending a large range of sports and craft clubs.
- Governors make a substantial contribution to the school. You provide governors with detailed reports, assisting them to carry out their roles effectively. Minutes of meetings show that governors appropriately hold leaders to account, asking challenging questions focused on pupils' academic success and well-being.
- You have appointed a pupil premium 'champion' who works effectively to provide social and emotional support to disadvantaged pupils and their families. You take care to ensure that disadvantaged pupils receive well-chosen academic support to enable them to make the progress of which they are capable. The link governor for pupil premium ensures that the progress of disadvantaged pupils

remains high on the agenda, regularly requesting information and assurance that the needs of pupils are being met. Thus, although in 2016 disadvantaged pupils made slightly less progress than other pupils nationally, the progress of current pupils is broadly in line with others.

- Additional funding for children looked after is thoughtfully spent and personal education plans show considerable support is ensuring that these pupils receive the support they need to achieve well.
- Nationally published assessment information in 2016 shows that girls did better than boys in reading, writing and mathematics. You have taken care to address this issue, to use texts that appeal to both boys and girls and to plan thematic learning that ignites the interest of all pupils. The most up-to-date assessment information shows there is not a consistent pattern regarding the progress and attainment of boys or girls. In half of the classes girls outperform boys and in half the reverse is true.
- In 2016, the proportion of pupils achieving the expected standard in the Year 1 phonics screening check fell for the third year and was below average. You took urgent action to address this, ensuring that all staff, including additional adults, received phonics training. Pupils have responded well to online resources that have helped to make phonics learning fun. You took action to ensure that the quality of phonics teaching in the early years and Year 1 is effective. As a result, most pupils currently in Year 1 are on track to achieve the expected standards in the phonics screening check.
- Above average proportions of children enter Nursery with skills and abilities that are typically seen. Children make secure progress throughout the early years so that four fifths enter Year 1 ready to learn. Early years staff have recently been commended for providing a good standard of education for the youngest children in school, achieving the local authority charter mark for early years provision. The leader for the early years has ensured that many daily opportunities are provided for children to develop their language and communication skills. You have secured the skills of a speech therapist to support successfully those children who have been slower to develop their language skills. Staff carefully select resources to help children develop the basic skills. The cumulative effect is that the proportion of children achieving a good level of development has increased for three years in a row.
- Leaders have developed a highly effective approach to developing pupils' spiritual, moral, social and cultural understanding. This has resulted in very consistent behaviour across the school. Pupils respond well to school values and display kindness towards one another. They say there is 'no bullying'. The school's own records support this view; racism and bullying are extremely rare.
- In 2015, the attendance of some disadvantaged pupils and those who have special educational needs and/or disabilities was too low. Leaders have given considerable attention to improving attendance throughout school, so that the vast majority of pupils now attend school regularly and on time. Attendance is now broadly in line with the national average overall and persistent absence is below national figures.

Next steps for the school

Leaders and those responsible for governance should ensure that:

- pupils in all year groups receive more precise teaching to enable them to achieve greater depth in writing
- teaching is further developed to ensure that all pupils have greater opportunities to apply their reasoning skills independently to develop mastery in mathematics
- more precise risk assessments underpin safe practices in school.

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

Yours sincerely

Lesley Butcher
Her Majesty's Inspector

Information about the inspection

During this one-day inspection, I was able to discuss the work of the school with you and your staff. We visited classrooms together to observe teaching and learning. I was able to look at pupils' work in books and to speak with pupils throughout the day. I heard pupils read. Discussions with the school improvement partner and four members of the governing body helped to provide me with additional information. School documentation, assessment information, policies and information posted on the school website were also taken into account. The views of 92 parents were taken into account through the Ofsted online questionnaire, Parent View. I looked at the responses of 21 staff through the online questionnaire. My main areas of focus during the inspection included checking what leaders have done to raise pupils' attainment in reading, writing and mathematics; the quality of teaching in phonics; the effectiveness of provision in the early years and the effectiveness of teaching to support all groups of pupils, including disadvantaged pupils, boys and girls.