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Mrs Donna Clark
Headteacher
Methodist Voluntary Controlled Junior, Infant and Nursery School: With
Communication Resource
Field Lane
Thornes
Wakefield
West Yorkshire
WF2 7RU

Dear Mrs Clark

**Short inspection of Methodist Voluntary Controlled Junior, Infant and
Nursery School: With Communication Resource**

Following my visit to the school on 8 March 2018, 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 July 2013.

This school continues to be good.

The leadership team has maintained the good quality of education in the school since the last inspection. Since taking up the permanent role as headteacher 10 months ago you, have moved very effectively and swiftly to address the challenges the school faced. You have made significant and positive changes to staffing. You have put in place rigorous and more regular systems for assessing the quality of teaching and its effect on pupils' progress. You have addressed the comparatively weaker progress in key stage 2 that resulted in last year's disappointing external test outcomes. Above all, you have created a culture of high expectations that is shared by all at the school. As a result of your actions, very effectively supported by governors, the school is well placed for further improvement.

The previous inspection report identified the need to share staff expertise so that, overall, the quality of teaching improved and all pupils, especially the most able, made better progress. Since coming into post as headteacher, you have addressed this very well. Because of your actions, staff now use the detailed information that the school gathers about pupils' progress to focus their teaching. Staff also share expertise through regular training and the sharing of ideas and good practice. You have developed staff expertise and confidence so that all staff feel able to contribute to improving the school. Staff morale is high. Evidence from pupils' writing books shows that most-able pupils, particularly in key stage 2, are now making much better progress. In a range of subjects, they are extending and

deepening their understanding and exploring ideas through writing neatly, accurately and at length. You are clear that, in key stage 2, there is still more to be done to develop pupils' control and responsibility for their own learning and to raise staff expectations even further of what all pupils, but particularly the most able, can and should be achieving.

You have acted decisively to address weaknesses in reading across the school, particularly in key stage 2. There is more talk about books and more books are readily available. You have established reading as an activity that takes place regularly both at school and at home. Pupils told me that they had noticed and welcome this. This approach has resulted in marked improvement in reading skill and pleasure.

Governors know the school and its community well. They share your vision of high expectations for all. They are skilled and effective in their support and challenge of you and your team of staff. Links between governors and particular areas and subjects at the school are well developed. Subject and phase leaders meet regularly with governors and report formally, in person, at governors' meetings. Governors regularly visit the school and undertake learning walks. They take an active and informed role in ensuring that all groups of pupils, including those who are disadvantaged, make the progress that they should. As a result, governors have first-hand experience of the school and closer insights into the progress it is making.

Parents and carers are very supportive of you and the school. All of the parents whom I spoke with, and who responded to the online questionnaires, were very complimentary about the service the school offers. They were particularly complimentary about you and your staff, your approachability and the way you balance care with challenge for their children. A number of parents spoke of how much their children love coming to school and how they welcomed recently introduced opportunities to help their children learn at home. Many of the parents that I spoke with and who texted mentioned the distinctive ethos and the inclusivity and openness of the school. A number spoke positively of the 'proud to be me' assemblies.

Safeguarding is effective.

The leadership team has ensured that all safeguarding arrangements are fit for purpose. Records are very well kept and are of high quality.

You have established and maintain a very robust culture of safeguarding at the school. You, your staff and the governing body take your safeguarding responsibilities very seriously. You ensure that effective, regular training is provided for all staff and governors. As a result, they are up to date in their knowledge and understanding. You, as designated safeguarding leader, have strong links with outside agencies. Your records of your dealings with these agencies show your meticulous and rigorous approach.

Inspection findings

- Children settle well into early years. This is because the early years leader establishes clear and open links with parents. Staff are very well deployed. Communication between home and school is very good. Children thrive in the challenging and carefully shaped environment, both inside and out. Talking is a strength in early years. I saw many examples of staff talking with children and helping them, through talk, to explore and extend their learning and excitement. One boy was particularly excited by the possibility of his cut-out figure having a shadow. The teacher deftly and kindly helped him explore shadow and symmetry, moving with him into the sun to see how shadows work. The boy was delighted. Children get off to a flying start in this setting and are well prepared for school.
- Most pupils make good progress through key stage 1. You and the key stage leader make sure that staff monitor the progress of pupils carefully. They then use the information they gather to focus their teaching on best meeting pupils' needs. You and your deputy make sure that this happens through regular visits to classrooms and meetings with staff to discuss pupils' progress. Teaching assistants are skilled and well deployed. For example, I saw a teaching assistant leading reading in a key stage 1 class. She was skilled in the way she asked focused questions about the text while maintaining the flow of the narrative. The pupils were both engaged with the story and learning from it because of her skill.
- You have used a range of effective strategies to ensure that reading standards improve. You and your senior team carefully analysed Year 6 pupils' responses to last year's national tests, question by question, to pinpoint precisely where staff need to focus their teaching to ensure that pupils do well. You combined this analytical approach with an emphasis on developing a culture and love of reading across the school. You are aware that more needs to be done to extend the opportunities that all pupils have to read and use their growing skills as readers to develop their writing. You have put in place a range of strategies that are already having a positive effect. For example, I saw your staff use deft questioning to help pupils make links between the devices writers use in the class reading book and pupils' own writing.
- During visits to lessons, I saw pupils thriving in stimulating classrooms where learning was a shared and exciting adventure. In a Year 6 mathematics lesson, for example, I saw the teacher using questioning very skilfully to draw out pupils' prior knowledge and then help them apply it to a new situation. Looking around the room, I saw all pupils engaged and eager to do well. They helped each other and responded very well to the high expectations and care of the teacher. Pupils' enthusiasm and eagerness to do well is also shown by the strong take-up of extra learning sessions for key stage 2 pupils before and after school. Pupils told me that they particularly enjoyed the 'Ninja SPAG' sessions after school on Thursdays, when staff focus on extending pupils' spelling, punctuation and English grammar skills. Pupils are very appreciative of the effort and care staff put into this and similar extra-curricular sessions.
- I saw many examples across the school of staff using questioning to develop and extend pupils' learning. I also saw pupils using the informative and attractive

environment and displays in the classrooms to find things out for themselves. Overall, classrooms are orderly, happy places where, as a result of good working relationships and staff skill, pupils are now making good and confident progress. Generally, staff expectations are high. However, you are aware that there is still more to be done to ensure that all staff have the highest expectations of what pupils can and must achieve.

- You, your staff and governors carefully monitor the progress of disadvantaged pupils. The numbers of these pupils and their differing needs change from year to year. You and your staff are diligent and consistent in your commitment to identifying and removing, wherever possible, barriers to learning and to success for these pupils. You target support carefully and specifically and monitor its impact regularly. As a result, disadvantaged pupils make good progress. Their attendance is now, generally, good. You spend the additional funding for these pupils effectively.
- Your special educational needs coordinator (SENCo) is very effective. She works with staff to monitor the progress of pupils who have special educational needs (SEN) and/or disabilities. She trains staff so that they can better meet the needs of these pupils. Additional funding is well spent. Staff expectations for these pupils are high. As a result, these pupils make good progress from their starting points. Relationships and communication with parents are good.
- The pupils in the communications resource are fully integrated into the school. They are taught, where appropriate, in mainstream classes. High expectations and high levels of care and challenge are key aspects of this provision. These attributes complement and add to the ethos of care and challenge that suffuses the school as a whole.
- Pupils told me that they feel safe and know how to stay safe. They described the regular training at school that helps them keep themselves safe in a range of situations, including when online. They told me that behaviour in class and around the school is very good. They said that there is no bullying at the school. They said that they know about, and are alert to, the range of forms that bullying can take and about what to do if it were to happen to them or to a friend. They would tell an adult and be very confident that adults at the school would deal with any bullying promptly and well. Your pupils are happy at school. Pupils were particularly keen to share with me the importance they attach to mutual respect and to understanding what it is like to be somebody else.

Next steps for the school

Leaders and those responsible for governance should ensure that they:

- continue to focus, particularly in key stage 2, on raising pupils' aspiration and teachers' expectations even further by continuing to share good practice among staff and encouraging pupils to take more responsibility for their own learning
- continue to strengthen the whole-school approaches to reading by developing further pupils' understanding of the links between reading and their own writing and its intended audience.

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

Yours sincerely

Mark Evans
Her Majesty's Inspector

Information about the inspection

The start of the inspection was disrupted by a heavy snowfall. The school did not open to pupils until 10.30 am. Once the school was open, I visited all classes to observe learning and, where appropriate, talk with pupils about their work and experience of school. I was accompanied by you in the majority of these visits. I scrutinised a wide range of pupils' books and folders of work. I was accompanied by your deputy for part of this scrutiny. I spoke with the school chaplain and then attended an act of collective worship conducted by him. I spoke with you, governors, the SENCo and your school improvement adviser from the local authority. I also met with three members of the communications resource team, including its manager from the local authority. I observed and spoke informally with pupils at the start and end of the day and during break and lunchtime. I spoke with parents at the start of the day. I met with four Year 5 and four Year 6 pupils, formally, to discuss their views of the school. I also listened to, and discussed, reading with four Year 3 pupils. I took into account 44 text messages from parents and the views of 51 parents on the Ofsted's online facility, Parent View. I also took into account the views of 17 staff and 42 pupils who responded to an online survey during the inspection. I read a range of documents about the school's progress, safeguarding systems, monitoring, staff training and governors' views.