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Mrs Lisa Stinchon  
Headteacher  
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Dear Mrs Stinchon

### **Short inspection of Sabden Primary School**

Following my visit to the school on 11 October 2016, 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.**

Leaders and governors have maintained the good quality of education in the school since the last inspection. You have high ambitions for pupils and have continued to improve the school. You provide staff with clear direction and strong, well-informed leadership that commands the full confidence and support of staff and parents. Morale is high and staff and pupils are happy and motivated. Working together, you and your staff are successful in achieving your school mission, to 'provide a safe, happy, healthy, caring, stimulating environment'. You provide pupils with the knowledge and skills they need to succeed in the next steps of their education. Your proactive approach to seeking partnership working, sharing best practice and drawing on external expertise ensures that the school continues to develop. There is good capacity within the school to sustain improvements.

You have built on the strengths that were identified at the last inspection. Pupils maintain high standards of behaviour and their enthusiastic attitudes to learning make an excellent contribution to their achievement. You have dealt successfully with the areas for improvement, which focused on improving teaching and raising pupils' outcomes. Teaching has improved following good-quality professional development and a review of your policies, for example in marking pupils' work and in the teaching of mathematics. Teachers provide pupils with precise feedback on their work, which supports them to extend their learning. The improvements in mathematics teaching have had a positive impact; Year 6 pupils made better than expected progress to reach above-average standards in the 2016 mathematics test.

Teaching takes more account of the varying learning needs and abilities of pupils in the mixed-age classes. Pupils who have lower starting points and those who have special educational needs and/or disabilities are supported very effectively so they often make accelerated progress. Teachers check their learning during lessons and provide them with individualised support where necessary. Resources are adapted appropriately to meet their needs. The most able pupils make excellent progress in mathematics because they are provided with challenging work that deepens their understanding. Although attainment remains above average in reading and writing, some of the most able pupils do not make the most rapid progress they could in these subjects. You have rightly identified the need to ensure that teaching supports the most able pupils to achieve a high standard in reading and to work at greater depth in writing as priorities in your development planning.

The above-average attainment that has been evident in the end of key stage standardised assessments for several years is being sustained. In 2016, all children in the early years achieved a good level of development at the end of Reception, so they were able to move confidently to the Year 1 curriculum. Pupils build on their skills successfully to achieve well in the phonics screening check and reach above-average standards at the end of key stage 1. In 2016, the proportion of pupils who attained expected standards in the Year 6 standardised assessments was above the national average. Your accurate pupil progress tracking and the work in pupils' books show that pupils currently in school are sustaining these high standards of attainment in reading, writing and mathematics in each year group.

The pupil premium is used effectively to ensure that any barriers to learning among disadvantaged pupils are addressed. Those who need help to catch up are provided with individualised support and the most able disadvantaged pupils are able to maximise their skills and talents. Disadvantaged pupils make just as good progress from their starting points as others in school and other pupils nationally. Their attainment at the end of Year 6 is in line with or above average when compared to other pupils nationally.

Parents' views reflect the inspection findings. Comments given verbally and in the Ofsted online questionnaire refer frequently to the 'community spirit', 'good academic achievement' and 'caring, fun and nurturing environment'. In the words of one parent, which sum up the views of many: 'This is a small village school with big school aspirations. It values its pupils and their families and provides a great start for children.'

### **Safeguarding is effective.**

Pupils' safety and welfare are priorities that are upheld by all staff and governors. They are well informed and carry out their responsibilities diligently. The school's policies and procedures are fit for purpose; staff know the routes to follow if they have a concern. Checks to ensure the safe recruitment of staff are rigorous and all staff are kept up to date with safeguarding requirements through regular training. Staff and governors consequently have a good understanding of their 'Prevent' duty

and of their responsibilities outlined in the revised 'Keeping children safe in education' guidance. Risk assessments are thorough and regular health and safety audits ensure pupils' safety around the school.

Pupils feel safe and are safe in school. They make an excellent contribution to the friendly and welcoming environment by behaving with care and consideration towards each other. Pupils who made their views known are positive that there is no bullying in school. They have a good understanding of different types of bullying, including for example the use of language to insult another's appearance, ethnicity or sexuality. They are taught explicitly how to keep safe when online and when outside school. All parents who responded to the questionnaire say their children are happy and feel safe, and the school deals effectively with bullying. Pupils' enjoyment of school is reflected in their above-average attendance.

### **Inspection findings**

- You provide clear direction and ensure that all staff are aware of their responsibilities and the school's improvement priorities. Staff are motivated by your leadership and share your ambition for the school and its pupils.
- Governance is very effective. Governors have a wide range of expertise and a good understanding of their responsibilities and national priorities. They know the school well because they analyse data thoroughly, ask probing questions, and maintain a strategic overview of the school's work.
- The new systems and procedures you have introduced are respected by staff. For example, staff welcome the chance for professional dialogue in your pupil progress meetings each half term and see them as a helpful steer to ensure that pupils make consistently good progress.
- Your self-evaluation is analytical and reflective. You ensure it is accurate by making good use of staff's expertise, local authority adviser support and opportunities for moderation through partnership work.
- You make good provision for staff's professional development, linked to their roles and interests and priorities for the school. Leaders at all levels make a valuable contribution to improvement because they have developed their skills and are empowered to do so.
- The curriculum is suitably broad and balanced to enable pupils to develop a good understanding of different subjects. Science is covered in depth and pupils relish the opportunities they have to investigate and experiment. Topics are planned carefully so that pupils in the mixed-age classes do not repeat content. However, their skills in subjects such as history, geography, design and technology are not built on as systematically as they are in other subjects from year to year.
- Children in the early years make a good start to their education. The nurturing environment instils confidence and helps them develop valuable skills for learning. Children feel safe and play happily with their friends.
- Children enter the early years with varied experience, but mostly with knowledge and skills that are typical for their age. They make good progress and typically achieve a good level of development by the end of the Reception Year. Children with limited experience catch up quickly because

they are provided with purposeful learning activities. The most able children extend their skills consistently in most areas of learning, but their writing skills are not developed as effectively. Their opportunities for developing writing skills in different contexts and extending their written vocabulary are not as varied as they could be.

- Teaching has a consistently good impact on pupils' learning over time across the school. Teachers know the pupils very well and take care to plan learning to meet their needs and take account of their interests. They encourage pupils and value their contributions, so they grow in confidence and are proud of the achievements. Teachers are reflective and keen to improve their practice where there is scope to improve pupils' progress, for example in foundation subjects and for some of the most able pupils.
- The curriculum is enriched with a wide range of additional activities within school time and in after-school clubs. As parents say, 'There are always extra activities going on ... it is a fun school with lots of fund-raising and fun activities'. The sport premium is used effectively to supplement the curriculum, broaden pupils' participation and increase their enjoyment of physical activity.
- The promotion of pupils' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development is a strong feature of the school's work. Pupils have a good understanding of values such as respect, democracy and the rule of law because they learn about them in lessons and they are exemplified in the work of the school.
- Pupils make an excellent contribution to the school through their considerate and helpful behaviour towards each other. They develop good leadership skills in various roles, for example as librarians, computer experts, school councillors and team leaders. Pupils' enthusiastic attitudes in lessons contribute to their good achievement and ensure that there is no disruption to learning.
- You are outward looking and determined that the school continues to develop. Your work with other schools in the local cluster is proving very effective. Staff have gained from sharing their expertise and learning from others. Your proactive approach to establishing and sustaining the partnership working is a key factor in its success. You have also welcomed local authority challenge and support, which is having a positive impact.

### **Next steps for the school**

Leaders and those responsible for governance should:

- ensure that teaching enables the most able pupils to reach high standards in reading and work at greater depth in writing, as outlined in the school's development plan
- review how well teaching and curriculum planning builds on pupils' knowledge and skills in subjects such as history, geography, design and technology from year to year
- make sure children in the early years have opportunities to develop their writing skills and writing vocabulary in a variety of contexts.

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

Yours sincerely

Jean Olsson-Law  
**Her Majesty's Inspector**

### **Information about the inspection**

During the inspection I had meetings with you and all teaching staff, five governors, the local authority adviser and a group of pupils. I observed teaching and learning in the four classes, looked at pupils' work and spoke to pupils during lessons. I spoke with parents at the school entrance and took account of 34 responses to Parent View, the Ofsted online questionnaire. I looked at information about pupils' progress and attainment and at your self-evaluation and action planning. I evaluated safeguarding procedures, including policies to keep children safe and records of training, safeguarding checks and behaviour management.

I considered the following lines of enquiry:

- how well leaders and governors have dealt with the areas for improvement identified at the last inspection, and capacity to sustain improvements
- the quality and impact of safeguarding procedures
- how well teaching meets the needs of all groups of pupils, especially the most able disadvantaged pupils and pupils who have special educational needs and/or disabilities
- whether pupils' high standards of attainment, which are evident in past data, are being sustained by current pupils
- pupils' progress in all subjects
- children's progress from their starting points in the early years
- the impact of the change in leadership since the last inspection.