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Mr Richard Craven
Headteacher
Nether Alderley Primary School
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Dear Mr Craven

Short inspection of Nether Alderley Primary School

Following my visit to the school on 2 February 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 your predecessor school was judged to be good in March 2012.

This school continues to be good.

The leadership team has maintained the good quality of education in the school since the last inspection. You, and your leaders, ensure that Nether Alderley Primary School is a happy, caring and safe school where pupils are inspired to love learning. You believe that every child must enjoy their education and your work to bring this mission to life is clear across the school. In every classroom, pupils are engaged because their lessons are enjoyable, relationships are strong and the atmosphere is calm and relaxed. Pupils say that their teachers really care about them and that you encourage them to live by the core values of honesty, respect, friendship, manners and teamwork. Your school is a highly valued and well-respected part of the local community. Parents say that their children blossom and thrive in your care because of the quality of education the school provides and the strong, effective communication between home and school. Several parents commented that their children are energised by their lessons and come home buzzing with excitement.

Across the school, it is clear to see why your pupils have a buzz for learning. You have ensured that every classroom celebrates pupils' work and, as such, the learning environment is lively and vibrant. There are high aspirations and expectations of what pupils can and should achieve. You ensure that from early years to key stage 2, pupils take pride in their work because the topics they are studying stimulate them and routines are fully embedded. In a key stage 2 lesson, pupils were excited to understand more about area and perimeter because their teacher's passion for the subject swept across the entire classroom. Because of this

passion, coupled with their determination, pupils made good progress. Older pupils were engrossed in writing a diary based on a book set in wartime which they had been reading. Their writing was mature. It showed flair and originality because of the level of vocabulary being used and the complexity of their sentence structures. Pupils achieved this because the teacher gave them opportunities to develop their own ideas in other ways before committing pen to paper. Previously, pupils had already empathised with the plight of the evacuees during the war through the medium of drama. It is clear that you, and your teachers, have rightly focused on improving the quality of pupils' writing.

Drama is not the only way that pupils are enthused to learn in your school. Since the school converted to an academy in 2014, you have led the way in the development of technology to support learning. Your pupils have been so successful that they have presented at a regional event about how technology improves their learning and progress. Pupils use technology to narrate stories, create e-books, for example, about Hinduism, and to receive real-time feedback from their teachers. Parents engage with their children's learning through technology. In the early years, for example, parents are given an electronic storyboard to help their children tell stories. This is designed to develop children's speech and language at home. In the early years, parents can follow their children's development through their online learning journey so they know exactly what progress their child is making.

These successful initiatives are testimony to your and your deputy headteacher's strong leadership. The work of the multi-academy trust also strengthens your leadership. It provides access to a range of support to share best practice, for example, by helping you to improve provision in the early years. It also provides high-quality networking opportunities and ongoing training for teachers and leaders. You also contribute to the work of the multi-academy trust by offering other schools support with the teaching of mathematics and the use of technology to support learning. The multi-academy trust also enhances your curriculum provision by providing access to high-quality arts, physical education, modern foreign languages, music and drama. Most recently, pupils have been involved in a production depicting the changes our society most need to make to improve our world. They have also participated in the Shakespeare festival.

During the inspection, we discussed the next steps for the school. First, you acknowledge that you will continue to build on your strong work to improve pupils' attendance so that it is consistently above the national average. We discussed the need to ensure that parents understand the link between attendance and their child's progress. Second, you acknowledge the need to continue to improve the quality of pupils' writing in the early years and key stage 1 so that more children reach or exceed the expected standard. Finally, you acknowledge that the strong improvements seen in early years need to be harnessed and further built upon so that more pupils achieve a good level of development by the end of the early years foundation stage.

Safeguarding is effective.

There is a culture of safeguarding across the school. The leadership team ensures that safeguarding arrangements are fit for purpose and records are detailed and of a high quality. You have undertaken additional supplementary safeguarding training courses, including one on child sexual exploitation. Staff and governors also receive appropriate training. Pupils feel safe in school and parents are unreservedly positive about the work you and your staff do to keep their children safe. Pupils report that there are rarely any incidents of bullying. You ensure that pupils are taught how to stay safe online, for example, through a programme run by the National Society for the Prevention of Cruelty to Children.

Inspection findings

- You continue to ensure that strong improvements are made in early years. Leadership of this area is now good and you have rightly made the necessary changes to provision to ensure that more pupils achieve the expected standard. The process of assessment and moderation of children's starting points is robust. Teachers use this information well to plan for the individual needs of the children in their care. They have a secure understanding of the developmental needs of each child. Timely intervention is used to address any shortfalls in development. The use of teaching assistants is particularly strong in ensuring children can express their thoughts and ideas. This helps to develop their confidence and independence.
- You have also rightly focused on children's writing skills in the early years. Through careful planning, children can practise and imitate language before they read it and write their own versions. Children are now making better progress in their writing; this is clearly visible in their books. The quality of pupils' work seen during the inspection and their stage in development indicate that pupils are on track this year to reach the national average. You and your leaders recognise that writing should continue to be an area for development in this phase to secure further improvement.
- To reach your aspirational targets for children in the early years, you recognise the need to forge a strong home-school partnership to enable children to excel. 'Stay and play' affords parents the opportunity to come into school to see how they can reinforce learning at home. Parents also attend as the mystery reader. This really enthuses children. They are proud that their parents are in school. Phonics is also taught effectively in small groups according to ability. This quickly builds children's confidence in reading.
- Although most pupils make good progress and attain well by the end of key stage 2, some boys have not always made as much progress as they should, especially in writing. You recognise this, however, and you ensure that pupils' writing continues to be an area for improvement across the school. Your monitoring and moderation systems are robust and you have a sharp focus on assessing the quality of pupils' writing. You also ensure that pupils' handwriting continues to improve and you use targeted support effectively to help pupils to keep up.
- Pupils achieve well in reading and most make good progress. This is because

they are given plentiful opportunities to read in school. This is supplemented at home. Pupils use intonation and expression well to convey meaning. Pupils work out the meanings of unfamiliar words by using clues from the sentence or paragraph in which they occur. Some pupils, however, could read harder books and should make better progress more quickly.

- Attendance has shown a steady decline for the last three years. You continue, however, to ensure that parents are aware of the importance of excellent attendance and so, this year, the picture is much more positive. The proportion of pupils attending the school regularly is now good and the proportion of pupils who are regularly absent from school is much smaller than in previous years. You recognise that this is an issue that you must raise with parents at every opportunity and you have committed to using the full range of sanctions, including fines.

Next steps for the school

Leaders and those responsible for governance should ensure that:

- they build on the positive improvements seen more recently in pupils' rates of attendance
- they harness the rapid improvements made to the quality of provision in the early years so that more children achieve a good level of development
- pupils' writing continues to improve in early years and in key stage 1.

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

Yours sincerely

Jonathan Smart
Her Majesty's Inspector

Information about the inspection

During the inspection, I met with you and your deputy headteacher, the chief executive officer of the multi academy trust, the early years teacher and the early years leader, parents of pupils from the school and members of the governing body. In addition, I held a telephone conversation with the school improvement partner. Also, I met formally with a group of pupils from across the school and talked informally with others around the school and in lessons. I listened to pupils read. Furthermore, I jointly observed teaching and learning in key stage 1, key stage 2 and the early years. I examined a range of documentation, including that relating to safeguarding, minutes of the governing body meetings, attendance information, pupils' assessment information, a range of policies and the school's curricular

information. I also undertook a review of the school's website. As part of the inspection, I considered 40 responses to Ofsted's Parent View, 33 responses from parents to Ofsted's free-text, 49 responses to the Ofsted pupil questionnaire and six responses to Ofsted's staff questionnaire.