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Mrs Amanda Hulme  
Headteacher  
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Dear Mrs Hulme

### **Short inspection of Claypool Primary School**

Following my visit to the school on 8 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 the school was judged to be good in March 2013.

#### **This school continues to be good.**

The leadership team has maintained the good quality of education in the school since the last inspection. You, your governors and deputy headteacher have created a school in which pupils are happy and keen to learn. Parents are supportive and your staff are very proud to work at Claypool. This is testament to your strong and caring leadership. You have made sure that staff feel valued and supported and parents feel that they are listened to. Governors, staff, pupils and parents have enormous confidence in your leadership and appreciate your 'open door' policy.

Your pupils are polite and respectful. They are positive ambassadors for your school and wear their uniform with pride. All members of the whole-school community are welcoming, caring and treat everyone with respect. Visitors can feel the warm and caring approach you take, from first entering school. It is easy to see the school's mission statement in action where 'everyone is valued, inspired and nurtured on their individual journey of success'.

You, staff, governors, parents and pupils have worked together to create a 'model of brilliance' for Claypool Primary School. This model clearly sets out your approach to developing pupils' basic skills, with many opportunities to display and use them: skills such as resilience, communication, creativity and diplomacy; attributes such as kindness, tolerance and confidence; citizenship through appreciating differences, caring for the environment and challenging injustice. This approach, where the whole community has worked together towards a common goal, underpins your

daily work and is lived by all who work and study in the school. Your 'brilliance' model supports the school's mission and is highly valued by all stakeholders.

Governors, senior leaders and staff have taken action to address the areas for improvement since the last inspection. At the previous inspection, inspectors identified the need to improve the quality of teaching. In response, leaders have created opportunities to stretch the most able pupils, for example by creating a school newspaper which encourages pupils to extend their writing and develop their team-building skills.

Following the previous inspection, you also rightly focused on ensuring that pupils know how to improve their work. You and your staff team have developed 'polishing', which gives pupils time and clear guidance on how to move their learning forward. This is applied consistently and is well received by pupils and parents – pupils are keen to 'polish' their work and show a great pride in their accomplishments. To further develop writing opportunities across the school, leaders have created more opportunities for pupils to write through the introduction of reflection diaries and learning journals. Pupils' books show that they now write in a range of subjects and for a variety of purposes. You are aware that even more improvements in writing are needed, particularly for boys and pupils who have special educational needs and/or disabilities.

The previous inspection also identified the need for action plans to improve the quality of teaching to have clear and measurable outcomes. Your plans to further improve the school are ongoing, working documents which encompass appropriate, timely and sharply focused outcomes. These plans are shared with governors, who hold leaders to account about how much progress has been made towards achieving these outcomes. Governors also triangulate discussions by regularly visiting classes and seeing the plans in action. Governance is strong at Claypool, as governors know the school very well and have high ambitions for all pupils at the school.

During the inspection, we discussed the next steps for the school to improve further. First, you acknowledge that you will continue to improve attendance, especially for disadvantaged pupils. Your work on reducing persistent absence is starting to have an impact, as rates of persistent absence for disadvantaged pupils have fallen in some year groups. Second, you acknowledge that for pupils' writing to improve further, you need to accelerate the progress made by boys and pupils who have special educational needs and/or disabilities. You have already begun to work on this and have altered your curriculum so that it engages and hooks boys into their learning more effectively. Third, you acknowledge that you need to improve strategies for monitoring and tracking pupils' progress in addition to measuring their attainment. You, leaders and governors will then know how well groups of pupils are progressing. Governors will then be able to hold you rigorously to account for the progress of pupils across all year groups.

## **Safeguarding is effective.**

Safeguarding is a strength of the school, as is the culture of care and nurturing for all pupils and their families. Leaders are thorough in making sure that pupils are safe. All safeguarding arrangements are fit for purpose, and records are detailed and of high quality. Staff have completed all the relevant and recent training so they know what to do if they have any concerns about pupils. You liaise closely with external agencies and make sure that pupils and their families get the help they need. Pupils know how to keep themselves safe, particularly online, as they have been well taught. Pupils trust staff in the school and would feel comfortable discussing any problems or concerns they may have. When pupils were asked what the headteacher's job was, the unanimous response was 'to keep us safe'.

## **Inspection findings**

- Leaders and all staff at the school are determined to drive further improvements across the school. Everyone is ambitious for pupils; staff work as a team. As staff say, 'everyone shares the same enthusiasm for doing the best job we can for every child in the Claypool family'.
- The work of the early years team has been successful in ensuring that the majority of children achieve a good level of development in line with national averages. There are still differences in the performance of disadvantaged pupils compared to that of their peers nationally, which the school is working to address as a priority.
- Clear assessments of the strengths and weaknesses of children on entry to the early years allow leaders to personalise the curriculum to ensure that teaching meets the needs of individuals. Writing is also a key area for improvement, but evidence of rapid progress was seen in children's work. For example, some work seen showed progress from mark-making in September to writing full sentences, such as 'If I was a minibeast I would be a worm because it eats mud', in the following summer.
- Achievement in the Year 1 phonics check is strong and outcomes are rising year on year. In Reception and Year 1, children are keen to learn and their positive attitudes underpin their learning. However, learning slows somewhat when pupils are not given the opportunity to answer for themselves.
- By the end of Year 2, pupils achieved well in reading and mathematics. Pupils did less well in writing. Boys achieved less well than girls overall, with only 60% of boys achieving the expected standard compared to 100% of girls. The redesign of the curriculum to include more themes to engage the interest of boys is beginning to have an impact, as they undertake activities such as planning to catch Red Riding Hood's wolf with enthusiasm and interest.
- Progress at the end of Year 6 is broadly average. Over time, progress has been in line with expectations, despite pupils getting off to the strong start they have in key stage 1.
- The achievement of disadvantaged pupils and the most able disadvantaged pupils is in line with their peers. This is because pupil premium funding is spent

appropriately. Leaders have initiated strategies to closely monitor the achievement of disadvantaged pupils, so that any underachievement can be swiftly addressed. Leaders are keenly aware of the financial barriers faced by some families and provide discreet support so these barriers can be surmounted.

- Test results compare well to national averages but senior leaders know that some pupils could make even better progress during key stage 2. Leaders are embedding new ways of assessing pupils' progress across the curriculum to make sure that no one falls behind.
- The relative weakness in writing in key stage 1 and key stage 2 is known to leaders and work is well under way to tackle this. Teachers are using a wide range of strategies to encourage pupils to write. Interesting tasks capture the interest of pupils and encourage their writing, for example in the recent project about Bear Grylls undertaken by Year 6 pupils. Pupils were delighted with a tweet from Bear Grylls, acknowledging their work and encouraging them to continue to enjoy their learning.
- The progress of pupils who have special educational needs and/or disabilities is closely monitored and tracked. Leaders work tirelessly to support pupils and ensure that pupils are given the appropriate support and help needed to overcome any barriers they may face.
- The school works hard to improve the attendance of disadvantaged pupils. Attendance is monitored closely and where issues are identified, they are referred to the school's attendance support worker and external agencies so that the appropriate support can be given. Consequently, the attendance of this group of pupils is improving for some pupils, but leaders are aware that the attendance of this group is currently below the national average.
- Behaviour for learning is good and pupils are developing as well-rounded citizens who are acquiring key skills for life, such as resilience, independence and aspiration. Last year's whole-school focus on resilience is being extended this year to focus on aspiration; this is evident throughout the school, particularly through displays, where pupils hold up their future career ambitions and show a wide range of age-appropriate aspirations from 'princess' to 'neurologist'.
- Teachers' good subject knowledge and accurate understanding of pupils' strengths and weaknesses result in pupils who enjoy their learning. Pupils are keen to please, are willing to try and they take pride in their work.
- Middle leaders work hard to develop their subjects. They work closely and effectively in partnership with other schools. The local cluster of schools provides opportunities to moderate assessments and share good practice to the benefit of pupils and teachers.
- Governors are regular visitors to the school and use the information they receive from leaders to hold the school to account. They are proactive in their work and have achieved recognition of their strong governance through the 'Governor Mark' award. Governors do not, however, fully use progress information to get a complete picture of the progress of groups of pupils in each year group and across a wide range of subjects.

## **Next steps for the school**

Leaders and those responsible for governance should ensure that:

- the teaching of writing becomes more embedded so that the rates of progress of pupils, including boys and those who have special educational needs and/or disabilities, further increase
- they continue to build on the positive improvements seen more recently in pupils' rates of attendance, particularly for disadvantaged pupils
- new assessment systems are further embedded so that middle leaders, senior leaders and governors know how well groups of pupils are progressing, particularly at key stage 2.

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

Yours sincerely

Helen O'Neill  
**Her Majesty's Inspector**

## **Information about the inspection**

During the inspection, I met with you and your deputy headteacher, the attendance support worker, the lead teacher for English and members of the governing body. In addition, I held a telephone conversation with the school improvement partner. I met formally with a group of pupils from across the school and talked informally with others around the school and in lessons.

You accompanied me on visits to all classes where we observed teaching and learning, spoke to pupils and looked at the work in some books. I looked at a wide range of English books and learning journals. I examined a range of documentation, including those relating to safeguarding, minutes of the governing body meetings, attendance information, a range of policies and the school's curriculum and assessment information.

I also undertook a review of the school's website. As part of the inspection, I considered 66 responses to Ofsted's Parent View, 49 responses from parents to Ofsted's free-text service, 25 responses to Ofsted's staff questionnaire and one pupil response.